THE MAKING OF A COLLECTION OF CARVED BIRDS BY ANDREW ZERGENYI, A HUNGARIAN IMMIGRANT TO THE UNITED STATES: A BIO-ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

MELISSA RUTH LADENHEIM

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BY

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APPENDIX A

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ABSTRACT

This study considers the making of a collection of carved birds by Andrew Zergenyi, a Hungarian immigrant to the United States. The data was gathered over a period of four years through an examination of the collection and through extended conversations with Zergenyi, members of his family, and various friends. The collection serves as point of entry into the exploration of Zergenyi's life history and worldview, both of which are informed by his engagement with the natural world as a hunter, amateur ornithologist, collector of ornithological specimens, manager of a large agricultural complex, and later as a carver of birds.

Carving and creating the collection is interpreted in the context of Zergenyi's life experience as a strategy for dealing with personal and cultural crises. Displaced from home and culture, Zergenyi turned to carving first as diversionary tactic and later, I contend, as a means of fostering integration in a life fragmented by displacement. This study also addresses the manner in which ethnography is conducted and constructed. While folklorists may be prepared to acknowledge the provisional nature of their interpretations, they are often less willing to discuss the conditional nature of their research. Describing the process by which ethnographies are made provides the reader with the context for the ethnography itself, an account that is too often presented as seamless and uncontested. As such, this study not only

examines Zergenyi as a maker of carvings and collections, it also reflexively considers my role as a collector of ethnographic material and a maker of ethnographic documents.

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Finally, I thank my family: my husband, Jamie Moreira, and my parents, Bernard Ladenheim and Francine Ladenheim, for their unwavering belief in me and for always being there. The thesis is dedicated to them.

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PROLOGUE

Freeville, New York, 1989.

It was close to noon by the time we finished our work for the day and we were sitting in the living room chatting casually about the carvings. Zergenyi sat in a favorite overstuffed armchair covered with a flowery-patterned throw. I sat to his left. His dog Troy circled around on the multiple layers of carpet covering the floor trying to get comfortable while remaining close to his master and watchful of me. Zergenyi grew impatient with the dog's efforts and spoke sharply to him in Hungarian. Troy looked sheepish and obeyed the command. Laying down where he was, he kept his eyes on his master who reached out a sinewy hand to lightly pat the dog's head. The sharpness of the previous moment gave way to the expression of a deeper affection between this man and his dog. My question broke the silence that pervaded the cool, dark room where heavy curtains and pieces of styrofoam fitted inside the window frames kept out the warm summer sun. "Which one is your favorite?" I asked. Zergenyi slowly rose from where he had been sitting, firmly placing his strong hands on the arms of the chair to steady himself. Troy stood up as well, studying his master in anticipation of his next move. He waved the dog aside and walked across the floor and through a doorway into his bedroom. He came back into the living room cradling in his hands a carving which he held out for me to see. "This is my

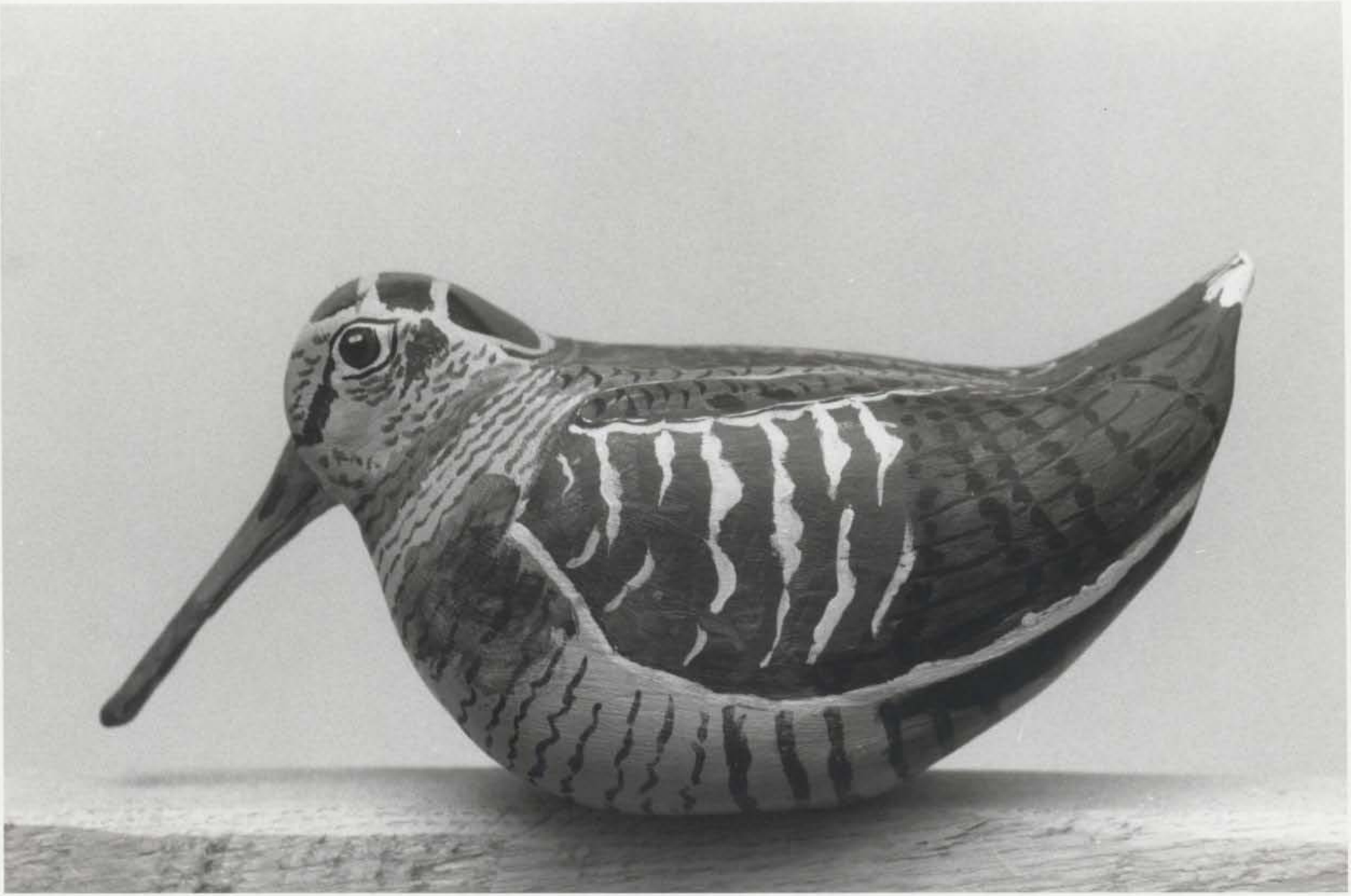
favorite," he said. It was a carving of a European woodcock and he liked it best, he said, because he frequently hunted it when he lived in Hungary (fig 1). He handed me the carving and I held it, its smooth, rounded shape fitting nicely in my hands. I admired the detailed painting and long, thin bill that must have been difficult to carve. Anticipating my next question, he told me he kept this woodcock on a shelf by his bedside and that I could not have it for the upcoming exhibit of his carvings I was curating. I handed the carving back to him, wanting to question him further about this piece, but it was now close to one o'clock and Zergenyi was anxious for me to go so as not to miss my ride back to town.

Hungary, 1930s.

The hunter felt exhilarated by the cool air of spring as he walked through the dense brush with gun in hand and jacket pockets laden with shot. The English-made Purdey shot gun he was carrying did not affect his pace, so accustomed was he to having it in his hand. Ahead of him, his German short hair pointer trod through last fall's leaves, wet from melted snow, with nose close to the ground and warm breath condensing in the cool air. It was well past dawn and the woodcocks would be at rest in the thick covert, having spent the better part of the evening and early dawn feeding in a nearby field not yet plowed for the spring's sowing.

The hunter threaded his way through the brush slowly and carefully, keeping a watchful eye on the dog, signalling to him when the animal strayed too far ahead. His

Figure 1. The European woodcock, Zergenyi's favorite bird.



muscles were taut with anticipation. He would only have a moment in which to react and he would have to be quick and accurate to be successful. The dog's movement ceased when he picked up the woodcock's strong scent. Pointing out the prey to the hunter, the dog stood quite still, nose up, body extended, tail out. The hunter acted quickly, almost instinctively, flushing the birds from the covert with a toss of a small, rounded stone. There was an explosion of action and sound as the startled woodcock scurried for new cover. Its habit of flying straight up and then darting diagonally among the twisted branches of the underbrush made the woodcock an especially difficult shot. The hunter brought the gun up, swung it around, and fired, the reverberations of the shots echoing the din of the frightened birds. He is a good shot. With the dead woodcock retrieved, the hunter and his dog walked on, repeating this pattern over and over until the day's hunt was brought to a close.

Years later he would recall these first spring days spent hunting the woodcock with an especial fondness, describing the experience as "mostly emotional hunting."

Bar Harbor, Maine, 1990.

Cardboard boxes filled with items from his home in Freeville had been brought in from the car and were scattered on the floor of Zergenyi's room in the home of his daughter and son-in-law in Bar Harbor. Zergenyi sat at the edge of his bed as I unpacked the boxes. Troy lay close beside him, simultaneously curious and suspicious of the activities occurring around him. To the things he had asked me to bring,

Zergenyi responded with a contented sigh, happy to have them again close at hand. To the things I had taken the liberty of including, he reacted with a bemused exasperation. Styrofoam packing peanuts spilled over the sides of the box as I carefully removed first a carving of a meadowlark and then one of a waterfowl scene. Shaking his head from side to side he said, "What the hell for you bring these?" but there wasn't any anger in his voice. And when I uncovered a capercaillie he had made while still living in Europe, his mood brightened.

Lastly, I unpacked the woodcock and as I handed it to him, he began to quietly weep. He held it for a moment and then slowly stood up, unsteadied less by his recent illness, than by the unexpected wave of emotion. He walked the few steps to his dresser, which sat next to the bed, placed the woodcock on the side nearest to him, and then returned to his seat. I sat down next to him and he reached for my hand and held it tightly, raising it gently to his lips as a gentleman might have done in the days when Zergenyi was young.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Andrew Zergenyi held a carving gently in his hands. Turning it slowly, contemplating its form and character he looked at me and said, "Each bird has its own story."[1] He had selected the piece from where it sat undisturbed in quiet fellowship with hundreds of other carvings. Together they formed a colorful and eclectic collection of birds from around the world. He called it a "study collection" and said it was intended for use in teaching students about birds. Several years and many hours of conversation later, I come back to that moment because since then I have, in essence, been holding Zergenyi and his collection in my hands, contemplating their form and character in order that I too might tell a story.

While the carvings initially attracted my attention, the narrative framework in which they were situated captured my interest, partially because, as a folklorist, I am strongly inclined toward stories. In search of both forms and contexts, folklorists expend a great deal of energy collecting stories: stories about momentous events,

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[1]Notes, 21 June 1989, 1. Quotations and other materials taken from my research notes will be referenced throughout the thesis according to this format. The date refers to the date of interview, the number after the comma is the page where the material is located.

stories about numinous events, life stories and personal experience stories, as well as stories about the making of objects and stories generated by objects. And once collected we begin to construct our own story which is really more accurately a translation, because we offer interpretation in addition to narration. In other words, we not only tell our audience a story, we also tell them what it means and why.

This study tells my story about Zergenyi and his collection of carved birds. Using the objects as the point of entry, it tells about Zergenyi's life and his abiding interest in the natural world, about making carvings and assembling collections, about what objects and their stories tell about their maker, what they mean to him, and what he meant by creating them.

This study is also a description of the manner in which that story was elicited and constructed. I purposefully call attention to the process by which ethnographies are made including, for example, the assumptions and expectations one brings to the research as a folklorist and the often uneasy negotiations that occur between researcher and informant as each seeks to achieve a particular, and not necessarily shared, objective. I do so because I believe that this kind of information is every bit as necessary and significant in an ethnographic document as is the contextual and genre-based material we typically find featured. It is, in fact, the context for the ethnography itself, the very details that give the reader a feel for the research process that is too often presented as seamless and uncontested. As such, this study not only examines Zergenyi as a maker of carvings and collections, it also reflexively considers

my role as a collector of ethnographic material and a maker of ethnographic documents. Echoing Barbara Myerhoff's comments about the reflexive nature of Number Our Days, it seemed "dishonest" to present the material in any other way.[2]

Andrew Zergenyi was born in Hungary in 1899, but did not start carving until 1945 when he was living as a displaced person in Austria. Financial hardship, depression, and "the unspeakable boredom of forced leisure,"[3] encouraged him to take up carving, first making chip-carved boxes and later birds. In 1952, he and his family left Europe for the United States, eventually settling in a small town in upstate New York. He continued to carve, fitting it in between the time spent working and that spent hunting, his one great passion. After retirement and cataract surgery, which affected his eyesight and made it difficult for him to hunt, he began to carve more earnestly and dedicated himself to creating the collection.

Even the most cursory of glances at the carvings evokes the kind of aesthetic response that classifies them as art, but are they folk or art?[4] By extension, is Zergenyi a folk artist? I raise these questions not because I think labelling expressive

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[2] Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) 30.

[3] Sally Peterson, "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth," Journal of American Folklore 101 (1988): 7.

[4] I put this question to Zergenyi early on in the research and he initially said the carvings were "a hobby." After some consideration of the question, he added that parts of the collection could be considered folk art, but he did not elaborate. Notes, 23 June 1989, 2. He has since referred to his work as a hobby and to himself as a "hobbyist." See chapter four.

behaviors or fitting them into more or less neat categories is our ultimate objective in seeking to understand how and why artful performance comes to hold meaning for the participants, nor because I am interested in retracing the footsteps of many along the well-trodden, if circuitous, path of definitions.[5] Rather, my objective is to draw attention to some of the assumptions under which we operate when we classify individuals or their work as folk. In particular, I am interested in those assumptions which inform our ideas on the nature of the relationship between an individual, a tradition, and a community.[6]

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[5]Holger Cahill's comments in American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750-1900 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, W.W. Norton, 1932) were among the earliest. Since then many have entered into the debate on the meanings of the terms folk, art, and folk art. Some of the more influential statements have been offered by Kenneth L. Ames, Beyond Necessity: Art in the Folk Tradition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977); Henry Glassie, "Folk Art," Folklore and Folklife, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972) 251-280 and idem, "The Idea of the Folk Artifact," in Vlach and Bronner, 269-274; Michael Owen Jones, Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work and Aesthetics (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1987) especially the essay "Modern Arts and Arcane Concepts: Expanding Folk Art Study," 81-95; Beatrix T. Rumford, "Uncommon Art of the Common People: A Review of the Trends in the Collecting and Exhibiting of American Folk Art," in Quimby and Swank 13-53; and John Michael Vlach, "American Folk Art: Questions and Quandaries," Winterthur Portfolio 15 (1980): 345-355. More recently, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has located the debate within the discussion of the politicization of culture in "Mistaken Dichotomies," Journal of American Folklore 101 (1988): 145-149. See as well the essays in Ian M.G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank, eds., Perspectives on American Folk Art (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980); and John Michael Vlach and Simon J. Bronner, eds., Folk Art and Art Worlds (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1983) which participate in the debate.

[6]John Michael Vlach addresses these relationships in "The Concept of Community and Folklife Study," in Bronner, ed., American Material Culture, 63-75. See also Simon J. Bronner, "Investigating Identity and Expression in Folk Art," Winterthur

There is a certain taken-for-grantedness in the concept of tradition that obscures its complexity in meaning and diversity in usage. Tradition has been variously understood and used by folklorists as the lore or items, as a mode of transmission, and more recently as a process, a symbolic construct, an interpretation, and a system of knowledge, to name a few of the more common conceptions.[7] And it is not uncommon to find folklorists calling on a number of these meanings within the same discussion. Despite arguments to the contrary, I consider the notion of tradition, in all its ambiguity, integral to the folklore process.[8] It is a useful construct both in its

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Portfolio 16 (1981): 65-83; and Shalom Staub, "Traditional Craftsmanship in Pennsylvania: An Ethnographic Perspective," Craft & Community: Traditional Arts in Contemporary Society, ed. Shalom Staub (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies and the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, 1988) 28-34.

[7]The term tradition has received its fair share of attention in the folkloristic literature, particularly since the theoretical shift from folklore as item to folklore as process. Dan Ben-Amos traces the various uses of the term in "The Seven Strands of Tradition: Varieties in Its Meanings in American Folklore Studies," Journal of Folklore Research 21 (1984): 97-131 and Dell Hymes discusses the apparently universal need to "traditionalize" experience in "Folklore's Nature and the Sun's Myth," Journal of American Folklore 88 (1975): 353-355, while Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin examine tradition as an interpretive process, not an objective reality in "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," Journal of American Folklore 97 (1984): 273-290. The essays in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) also address this issue. On tradition as knowledge see Kay Cothran, "Participation in Tradition," Readings in American Folklore, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 444-448 and Michael Owen Jones, The Handmade Object and its Maker (Berkeley: U of California P, 1975) 71-73. In addition, one of more influential statements on the subject is Edward Shils, Tradition (Chicago:U of Chicago P, 1981).

[8]Ben-Amos argues against tradition as a criterion of folklore in "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," Towards New Perspectives in Folklore, eds. Américo Parades and Richard Bauman, Publications of the American Folklore Society,

understanding as a process of traditionalization in which people are indisputably engaged and as a system of knowledge through which people orient themselves socially, culturally, and materially to the past and present worlds in which they conduct their lives. Conceiving of tradition as informal rules and knowledge, not simply as forms and techniques, has two advantages. First, it recognizes that tradition is not necessarily an exclusive way of life where one is either traditional or not. Each individual is at once influenced by and a potential participant in all levels of culture. Instead, it acknowledges the potential for an individual to use or enact traditional knowledge circumstantially and coincidentally with other forms of culture. Thus, borrowing Howard Becker's notion of "art worlds," we can think of tradition as a kind of "knowledge world" coexisting and interfacing with other knowledge worlds. Becker writes:

> Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artifacts.[9]

Conventional understandings and common practice ring familiar to the folklorist's ear. In the following passage, I have substituted the word tradition for the word art to

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v. 23 (Austin: U of Texas P, 1972) 13-14. In contrast, Hymes calls it "essential to a conception of folklore," 353 while Michael Owen Jones contends in Craftsman of the Cumberlands, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1989) that the "enduring contribution of folklore research is its discoveries about tradition," 263.

[9]Howard S. Becker, Art Worlds (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982) 34.

demonstrate the validity of the idea of tradition as a knowledge world. Referring to members of an art world Becker writes:

> Their mutual appreciation of the conventions they share, and the support they mutually afford one another, convince them that what they are doing is worth doing. If they act under the definition of [tradition], their interaction convinces them that what they produce are valid works of [tradition].[10]

The second advantage of conceiving of tradition as knowledge is that it encourages researchers to search beyond the object, beyond the products of expressive behaviors to the ideas and intentions, to the knowledge made tangible in performance. Because, as Henry Glassie contends, "the issue is not forms and how they are developed and presented; it is values, cultural priorities, and how they are ordered and enacted."[11] As a result, the same knowledge and skills used to build great cathedrals or simple wooden houses, to trap bears, sew *paj ntaub*, or weave baskets is used to make gargoyle caricatures, doll houses, miniature bear traps, story cloths, and

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[10]Becker 39.

[11]Henry Glassie, "Folkloristic Study of the American Artifact," Handbook of American Folklore, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1983) 380-381.

telephone wire sculptures.[12] Shalom Staub reminds us that "tradition is not in the artifact itself, but rather in relationships."[13]

In the following discussion, I describe several types of relationships (along what is really a continuum) between the individual, the tradition, and the community as a means of illuminating some of the assumptions we hold about the nature of these relationships. Various artists and their work are cited because they are exemplary, not because they are exceptional, although they may be that as well. However, the examples provided are meant to be illustrative only and as a result many other artists whose experiences and work would serve the purpose equally well go unrecognized. This is not a matter of oversight, but one of choice, because the contentious issue is not the study of individual artists, but how we fit their performances into the larger pictures of tradition and culture. The validity of focusing on individual performers has long since been established by the large number of books and articles devoted to them

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[12]Documentation of these and numerous other examples can be found in publications such as Jane Beck, ed., Always in Season: Folk Art and Traditional Culture in Vermont (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Council on the Arts, 1982); Mary Hufford, Marjorie Hunt, and Steven Zeitlin, The Grand Generation: Memory, Mastery, Legacy (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1987); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review," in Oring, A Reader, 329-338. Willard B. Moore, et al., Circles of Tradition: Folk Arts in Minnesota (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1989) to cite only a few.

[13]Staub 30. In a similar manner, Gerald Pocius notes, "Although spatial relations are part of any artifact ethnography, material culture studies sometimes start by choosing a particular category of object . . . I realized that I had to . . . start with space and discover the social relations that individual objects fostered within that space." In A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1991) 8.

in the last generation or so.[14] Even in cases where a community is the focus of study, researchers have tended to rely on the input of one or a few informants whose perspectives and insights are particularly revealing.[15] Leaving considerations of genre aside, the reasons any one individual is selected for study are complex, but one common factor appears to be the artist's status relative to his or her community. Folklorists seem to gravitate toward individuals who exist both literally and

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[14]There are far too many publications featuring individual artists to list them all here. Some of the more notable ones are Roger Abrahams, ed., A Singer and Her Songs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1970); Charles Briggs, The Woodcarvers of Cordova, New Mexico: Social Dimensions of an Artistic Revival (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1980); Simon J. Bronner, Chain Carvers (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1985); Linda Dégh, Folktales and Society: Storytelling in a Hungarian Peasant Community (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969); William Ferris, Local Color (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Edward Ives, Larry Gorman: The Man Who Made the Songs (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964) and idem, Joe Scott: The Woodsman-Songmaker (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978); Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker; and John Michael Vlach, Charleston Blacksmith: The Work of Philip Simmons (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1981). A useful, but slightly out of date review of biographically based folk art studies is provided by Sara Selene Faulds and Amy Skillman in Simon J. Bronner, American Folk Art: A Guide to Sources (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984) 99-116. The focus here is on contemporary scholarship, but older works such as Mark Azadovskii, A Siberian Tale Teller, trans. James R. Dow (1926; Monograph Series No. 2, Austin: Center for Intercultural Studies in Folklore and Mythology, 1974) and Ruth Bunzel, The Pueblo Potter (1929; New York: Dover, 1972) remain influential.

[15]Myerhoff states that while she spoke with about half of the three hundred members of the Center members, she "established a particularly strong and gratifying attachment to one individual" who was "particularly knowledgeable and articulate," 29. Similarly, in Passing the Time in Ballymenone, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series 4 (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982), Henry Glassie writes, "the community will include people who can turn interviews into conversations, who can present its significant texts," 14.

figuratively on the margins.[16] Both singer Paul E. Hall and chairmaker Chester Cornett typify the marginal character, standing out from the larger community to which they belong, but in a somewhat different manner so too does singer Almeda Riddle. When compared to other members of her community Roger Abrahams observed, "there are few who share her approach to life and her passion for the old songs."[17] As such these artists offer a perspective from the periphery that often serves to define the center and articulate its values and aesthetics. Performers like Riddle and Cornett may be marginal by comparison but they nonetheless come from an identifiable community and out of well-defined tradition. Both learned their arts traditionally, informally observing, absorbing, and modelling their work on those around them: Riddle mostly her father and Cornett mostly his grandfather. While they may stand out as individuals by virtue of personality and conduct, in terms of performance they are, with perhaps a few notable exceptions, relatively conventional, producing items of expressive culture which incorporate forms and styles that are comprehensible and meaningful to those around them. Perhaps then our reasons for turning to the individual, marginal or otherwise, is because "a culture becomes much

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[16]The individual who became Myerhoff's "teacher, guide, and critic" as well as friend was an outsider in the Center community, 29. See also Ames 26.

[17]Abrahams 158. Anna Bock, the subject of Bronner's study in "Investigating Identity," is not only marginal in her own community, but also in relation to the "outside" world as an Old Order Mennonite.

clearer to the outsider when it is seen from the vantage point of an individual's life."[18] Whereas the tradition bearer humanizes the folklore process, the individual performer personalizes it. Furthermore, it is in the dialectic between individual interpretations of communal traditions that a "key to understanding the nature of folklore" may be found.[19]

There are other individual performers who are working within a well established tradition, but whose links to that tradition are somewhat more extended. Memories remain vivid, but the actual links in the transmission chain have been interrupted or even broken. One well known example is Pueblo potter Helen Cordero who "reinvented a long-standing but moribund Cochiti tradition of figurative pottery" with her Singing Mother and Storyteller dolls.[20] Making figurative pottery along with more utilitarian forms has a long history in Pueblo culture, but it was mostly "silent" in the twentieth century until "Helen broke that silence when she remembered her

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[18]Clyde Kluckhohn, "The Personal Document in Anthropological Science," The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology, and Sociology, eds. Louis Gottschalk, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Robert Angell (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1945) 93.

[19]Gyula Ortutay quoted by Dégh, Folktales and Society 59. See also Henry Glassie, "Skill," The Old Traditional Way of Life: Essays in Honor of Warren E. Roberts, eds. Robert E. Wall and George H. Schoemaker (Bloomington: Trickster P, 1989) 12.

[20]Barbara Babcock, "Modeled Selves: Helen Cordero's 'Little People'" in Turner and Bruner 316.

grandfather's voice and shaped that first Storyteller."[21] In turning to figurative pottery Cordero found a means of expression at once personal and communal. She creatively shaped the clay with her own hands and infused the dolls with a spirit embedded in both personal history and traditional culture. Through the pottery she enacts cultural values and they in turn dramatize personal concerns. As Cordero has observed, "we're all in there, in the clay."[22]

Clearly all the artists cited so far are firmly rooted in their traditional cultures and their links to those cultures are evident not only in how and what they perform, but also in the meanings both they and their local communities attribute to and derive from the material. At the same time old and new, these forms embody communal knowledge and are shaped by personal experience. These artists perform to or with an audience in mind and as such their work reaches out into the human social world. Their art functions "as a device to connect the artist to his society,"[23] not to isolate him from it. Even when the demands of personal expressiveness push at the borders of

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[21]Babcock 323. Details of this revival and its positive influence on the figurative pottery tradition in general are described and beautifully illustrated in Barbara Babcock, Guy and Doris Monthan, The Pueblo Storyteller (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1986).

[22]Babcock 328.

[23]Gene W. Metcalf, "Black Folk Art and the Politics of Art," Art, Ideology, and Politics, eds. Judith H. Balfe and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski (New York: Praeger, 1985) 186.

communal aesthetics, the desire is to confirm not challenge or undermine existing norms and values.

Recently, folklorists have begun to examine artists whose work is less clearly situated within a well-defined tradition or community. These expressive forms are problematic because they "fail to meet the criteria of traditionality that folklorists associate with folklore."[24] One such category of artists are the memory artists, typically elders, who did not necessarily learn their skills traditionally,[25] but who "proudly take credit for their personal discovery of a medium and form for recasting their lives."[26] Their skills may be innovative but by and large the thematic content of their work is rooted in traditional knowledge and experiences. "Recasting" this

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[24]Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Authoring Lives," Journal of Folklore Research 26 (1989): 147.

[25]See Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory." Cf. Claudine Weatherford, The Art of Queena Stovall: Images of Country Life (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1987) who calls Stovall a "self-taught, though not uninfluenced, painter of everyday, rural scenes" rather than a folk artist although Stovall's art clearly drew thematically on and was appreciated by her local community, 134-135. Painter Anna Bock also falls into this category of artist, in Bronner, "Investigating Identity."

[26]Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory" 336. Not all artists meeting this description are elders. Vietnam veteran Michael Cousino, who creates dioramas depicting scenes of the war, is one such person. However, like the older memory artists, his work was inspired by the confluence of dislocation and a pressing need to make sense of events in his life. See Varick Chittenden, "'These Aren't Just My Scenes': Shared Memories in a Vietnam Veteran's Art," Journal of American Folklore 102 (1989): 412-423. For a discussion of this phenomenon on a cultural level, see Peterson who writes story cloths "illustrate the resourcefulness of a culture to translate its principles into new creative endeavors--to pluralize its aesthetic systems rather than relinquish control of them," 11.

knowledge, they create forms which, in their "focus on the enduring and recurrent, rather than on the unique," unite the individual with the collective.[27] Thus, these works of art featuring individual interpretations of collective experiences are intelligible and meaningful not only to the artist, but also to his or her cohorts.[28] And while the impetus to create may be personal and the skills and materials employed unprecedented, the artist's intention is not seclusion, but fellowship and camaraderie.[29] In fact, the work of these artists often functions to relieve the isolation imposed by age, retirement, infirmities, widowhood, and such, by providing a medium through which to cultivate connections. As needleworker Ethel Mohammed, whose embroidered scenes are "like a family picture album," said, "When I go to festivals and things like that, it delights me for people to look at my pictures. And I feel like I am sharing them." She continued, "They're like having my children around me."[30] Likewise, sculptor Michael Cousino commented, "These aren't just my scenes. I'm

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[27]Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Authoring Lives" 139.

[28]Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines cohorts as "those who share an ethos because they lived through the same historical experiences during the same stage of the life course," in "Authoring Lives" 125. For an excellent example of this process in action, see Chittenden.

[29]According to John Vlach, artists "may work alone, even in seclusion, but they will work within a socially sanctioned set of rules for artistic production" which insures "they are mentally connected even if physically isolated" in "'Properly Speaking': The Need for Plain Talk About Folk Art," in Vlach and Bronner 20.

[30]See Ferris 102, 120.

doing something for my own personal out, but I'm also helping someone else out."[31] By shaping memories and experiences into forms, memory artists affirm they "are not only witnesses to what once was, they are also individuals with a profound need to be witnessed."[32] Viewing the work of memory artists from this perspective makes it much less problematic for the folklorist because it shifts attention away from the issues of formal precedence and mode of instruction and focuses it on the intentions of the maker and the ideas informing the object.

At the end of this continuum of individual artists are those creators whose work is clearly on the fringe in terms of their relationship to both the tradition and the community. These artists have been variously termed naive, idiosyncratic, outsider, and visionary. Eugene Metcalf writes:

> makers of this art are said to be so cut off from social intercourse that they exist outside normal community bonds. Responding, it is said, only to their particular, individual visions or dementia, they are believed to produce a starkly original art which is thought to transcend social or artistic conventions.[33]

James Hampton is a frequently cited example of the idiosyncratic artist, although his work has been included in several folk art exhibitions. Hampton has

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[31]Chittenden 422.

[32]Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Authoring Lives" 138. Myerhoff makes the same observation about the elders featured in Number Our Days. She writes, "More afraid of oblivion than pain or death, they always sought opportunities to become visible," 33.

[33]Eugene W. Metcalf, "Folk Art, Museums, and Collecting the Modern American Self," Contemporary American Folk, Naive and Outsider Art: Into the Mainstream? (Oxford, OH: Miami U Art Museum, 1990) 16. See also Becker 258-269.

become posthumously famous for his monumental work The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly. Described as a private man, Hampton created The Throne in a garage and seldom showed it to anyone. Its audience, therefore, was as personal as its inspiration, so much so that Metcalf has described the piece:

> not as folk art; it is downright asocial art, drawing its power and intensity from a man consumed by, and responsible to, the art alone. . . . Hampton's work drew him apart into a private universe.[34]

Based on the same rationale, John Vlach argues against calling artists such as sculptor Simon Rodia, woodcarver Edgar Tolson and painter Edward Hicks folk artists. Both Rodia and Tolson, he contends, were inspired by a private vision and their work was unprecedented within their respective communities, while Hicks's "The Peaceable Kingdom" "was a personal statement, although many others could understand it."[35] Both Metcalf and Vlach take issue with the work described above because it was not only personally inspired, but also personally directed. And though works like Rodia's "Watts Towers" unavoidably attracted attention, apparently he did not particularly seek other audiences nor desire to make connections to some larger community. Whether or not we ultimately share Metcalf's or Vlach's position on the

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[34]Metcalf, "Black Folk Art" 186.

[35]Vlach, "American Folk Art" 347-354. In "Properly Speaking," Vlach argues that the "representative art" of a traditional society "is not created by its deviants and misfits . . . but by normal, intelligent, well-adjusted citizens who care deeply about their history" 16.

individual artists named (and some would certainly dispute it),[36] we can nonetheless consider the substance of their arguments. For both the crucial issues are the source of artistic inspiration and the relationship of the artist to others. So committed is Vlach to the essentialness of the communal element in folklore that he asserts "something cannot be logically or legitimately labelled as folk unless it is in some way tied to a social unit, to a group."[37] Thus, if the artists draw on local knowledge and familiar forms and if they seek to cultivate connections with their community through their art, then Metcalf and Vlach contend the work can be rightfully considered folk art. Otherwise, they argue, the creations are simply art. Glassie says much the same in his critique of folk art. Folk art is produced he writes, when "the intention was esoteric and traditional."[38] Further refining his conceptual categories, he suggests that "folk" in folk art "provides specific information about the source of ideas that were used to produce the object" while "art" provides "information about the intentions of its producer."[39] In making these distinctions between kinds of art, folklorists (in

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[36]For example, in "Watts Tower and the *Giglio* Tradition," Folklife Annual 1985, ed. Alan Jabbour and James Hardin (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985) 142-147 l. Sheldon Posen and Daniel Franklin Ward argue that Rodia's work is not unprecedented, but rather is an extension of the long standing *giglio* tradition.

[37]Vlach, "The Concept of Community" 63.

[38]Glassie, "Folk Art" 253.

[39]Glassie, "Folk Art" 258. See also Beck 22. Zergenyi himself defines folk art in terms of both social group and mode of learning. During a conversation on the topic he offered his definition of folk art in response to my question. "Folk art is what is made by the folks, not by artists," he said and added that the a true folk artist was one

contrast to art historians) are not offering critiques of artistic competence or object quality, but rather are drawing attention to assumptions about the personal and cultural expectations for and social relationships engendered by the work.[40] Their comments encourage us to carefully consider all the factors that contribute to the folkloristic nature of performance. Thus, if we enter research at the level of the products of performance we may be able to more easily dismiss them as not being folklore than if we enter at the deeper level of knowledge, skills, and intentions where we likely will have to reckon with these expressions as folklore.

The assumptions under which we operate when we call an artist folk or traditional may be summarized in terms of a number of appositions which recurrently appear in discussions of folk art and artists including: individual versus collective, personal versus communal, precedented versus novel, conservative versus dynamic, private versus public, and so on. Artists and their work are evaluated according to this model or some variation of it. If, on the one hand, the expressive forms are too personal, too private, too new, and too exclusionary, they will "fail to meet the criteria of traditionality" and thus fall outside the bounds of folk art. On the other hand, those items which are conservative, precedented, "esoteric and traditional" are securely located within them. It is the work falling somewhere in between that is most

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informally trained. Notes, 23 June 1989, 1.

[40]In addition to the sources previously cited, see Jones, Handmade Object 241-242; Bronner, Chain Carvers 143.

problematic and which tenaciously challenges conventional notions about the relationship of the individual to tradition and to community.[41]

Having discussed the concept of tradition and the role of the individual, I will now briefly consider, or perhaps more appropriately reconsider, the concept of community which, like tradition, has been integral to the definition of folklore. The prevailing conception of community envisaged, until recently, by many folklorists was informed by past notions of traditional societies and their inhabitants as being rural, engaged in resource-based occupations, self-sufficient, a-literate, and so on. Membership was typically acquired through birth and traditional skills and knowledge through the regular interaction with others with whom one shared numerous connections.[42] While somewhat idealized, an only slightly modified version of community has dominated folklorists' conceptions up to, and some would argue including, the present day. But the notion of communities has undergone revision, particularly in its conjunction with folk group. As such, we speak of communities in terms of ethnic, age, and occupational groups--to name only a few of the many permutations. The social organization of community has not completely supplanted its

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[41]Many of the essays collected in Daniel Franklin Ward, ed., Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1984) fall squarely into this category. See for example, Varick A. Chittenden, "Veronica Terrillion's 'Woman Made' House and Garden" 41-61; Jennie A. Chin, "The 'Second Adam' and His 'Garden'" 83-97; and Mary Ann Anders, "Celebrating the Individual: Ed Galloway's Park" 124-132.

[42]See Robert Redfield, The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960).

delineation along geographic lines; the spatial conception of community is as place (both real and symbolic) rather than simply locale.[43] Furthermore, there are members of some communities who have not met, and likely never will meet, face to face, although they will interact daily on an informal basis cultivating and sharing a body of traditional knowledge. Members of a particular computer news group are one example, ham radio operators another. Returning momentarily to the memory artist suggests another variation on the concept of community, what might be thought of as a symbolic community whose existence is constructed and reconstructed from memories, old photographs, and saved objects. Whether referencing the past or present, or constituted along spatial, temporal, or social lines, the concept of community remains useful in folklore not necessarily as a way of delimiting the field,[44] but as a means of directing attention to the importance of affirming commonalities and establishing connections (real or aspired to) between self and others. Just as people are undeniably engaged in the traditionalization of their lives, so too are they involved in constructing meaningful attachments to others. However, neither of these processes nor their subsequent products may, at first glance, meet the

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[43]The idea of place employed here draws on Yi Fu Tuan's definition of place which is experientially and conceptually constructed as both object and symbol. See Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977). Mary Hufford's One Place, Many Spaces (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1986) is an excellent example of a community study which takes a regional focus.

[44]Vlach contends "highlighting the concept of community prevents folklife researchers from studying the wrong stuff" in "The Concept of Community" 68.

criteria we have established as folklorists to identify those things which are folklore. While that often makes us question our material, it should, moreover, make us question our models and the assumptions upon which they are built.

Working with Andrew Zergenyi and his collection of carved birds has compelled me to reflect not only on the nature of his relationship to tradition and to community, but also on the assumptions I hold as a folklorist about that relationship. As cultural researchers working within disciplinary frameworks, we become mindful, perhaps unwittingly, of certain expressive forms--such as the comment "each bird has its own story" and hand carved birds--which, in meeting our desires for the "real stuff," conform to our expectations and gird our assumptions. But finding what we are looking for is not the same as seeing what is there. With Zergenyi I initially saw a tradition of woodcarving enlarged through narrative. The community, however, proved a little more elusive, but given his status as an elderly immigrant, I tentatively constructed one in my mind. Discovering that he had learned to carve by observing a fellow Hungarian who, along with him, was a member of a "community" of displaced Hungarians who had sought refuge in Austria after World War II, and also that he initially carved forms in a style characteristically Hungarian--only later pursuing his

personal interest in birds[45]--securely located the work within the boundaries of the discipline, at least on the surface anyway.

Applying the disciplinary criteria had effectively led me to discover folkloristic features in the material and its maker, but it also caused me to overlook those places where the folklore truly resided, where tradition, community, identity, and meaning converged and became significant. While Zergenyi had been exposed to the rich carving traditions of Hungary, it was not as a shepherd tending his flock, nor as a peasant decorating household items, but as a possessor of some very expensive and very elaborately carved wooden chests. As such, the tradition, his tradition, was not located in technique, but in theme. It was not in the carving, but in the birds, and more precisely in the extensive ornithological knowledge and experience Zergenyi called on when creating them. And it was in his knowledge and experience of nature, which he had acquired informally as he accompanied his father on hunting and other excursions in the fields and forests of his native Hungary. Here he learned to read and interpret the natural world, to identify its forms, to move "instinctively." The tradition was also in his ideas about how one gained knowledge about and participated in the natural world, and how this information might be put to use in some long term

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[45]Although birds are a popular motif in Hungarian folk art, their stylized forms contrast markedly from the realism Zergenyi strives for in his carvings. See, for example, Edit Fél, Tamás Hofer, and Klára K.-Csilléry, Hungarian Peasant Art (Budapest: Corvina P, 1969); Károly Gink-Ivor and Sándor Kiss, Folk Art and Folk Artists (Budapest: Corvina P, 1968); Tamás Hofer and Edit Fél, Hungarian Folk Art (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979).

framework--thus the collection. And it was also in the skilful use of tools which relied on sharp eyes and steady hands to transform natural materials into cultural artifacts.

The community to which he belonged and the one to which he sought to maintain connections was not made up of fellow refugees in Austria, nor other Hungarian immigrants who made upstate New York their home.[46] In fact, like the memory artists described above, the places which Zergenyi called home or felt most at home in were ones circumstances had compelled him to leave many years earlier. An ocean and a goodly portion of land separate him from these places, but the physical distance has not weakened his emotional attachment which remains strong to this day. And like so many artists who discover "a medium and form for recasting their lives," he did not seek seclusion, but a means of making connections to others. The collection, then, was not made to be a fortress, but rather a bridge, constructed in the present as a way of linking his past and future. But the metaphors of fortresses and bridges both succeed and fail to accurately capture his relationship to community, for

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[46]There is a moderately sized community of Hungarian immigrants in Tompkins County, New York where Zergenyi and his family eventually settled. The community is made up of turn of the century immigrants and their offspring as well as a smaller number of Hungarians who arrived after 1956 and their children. Zergenyi, apparently by choice, had relatively little contact with members of this Hungarian community. Perhaps it was because unlike the majority of Hungarians who came to United States in the early 1900s as economic immigrants, he was a political refugee who left Hungary under very different circumstances. Steven Bela Vardy comments on relations between these groups of immigrants in The Hungarian-Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985) 119-122.

he also used the collection to achieve closure and to promote a system of values he found lacking in members of the community where he resided. Initially, I struggled with fitting Zergenyi into the paradigm of tradition and community I had rightly or wrongly constructed, but ultimately I have come to realize it is a misplaced effort, because what is truly of interest is the *nature* of that relationship, not how it conforms to predetermined models. This study, then, explores that relationship through an examination of Zergenyi's life and his work, challenging some of the assumptions under which we operate and confirming others.

Just as Zergenyi and his work draw on many different, but related, traditions of knowledge, so too does this study. There is no one school of thought or field of knowledge shaping this thesis, nor one generic category which fully encapsulates the theories and methodologies employed or the interpretations offered. As a result, a single chapter devoted to a review of the literature is decidedly untenable, as it would consist essentially of a mosaic of several literatures from which I have borrowed and applied theoretical paradigms accordingly. Therefore, in each chapter I examine those theories and approaches I have found pertinent and useful in analyzing and interpreting the particular issues or topics discussed therein.

Zergenyi's life history is presented in chapter two. More attention is given to the portion of his life spent in the United States not only because there is more ethnographic data on this period, but also because this is when the carving collection

was conceived and produced. There is also another factor which influences the content of this biographical sketch and that is Zergenyi's willingness to discuss certain periods of his life. He often deflected questions probing the details of his life in Europe--especially those significant years of turmoil during and just after the Second World War--because they roused painful memories of times he apparently had little desire to discuss. In an effort to flesh out the skeletal history and context of his life in Hungary, I have looked to works such as Patrick Leigh Fermor's accounts of his travels through Austria and Hungary in the early 1930s;[47] Vladimir Nabokov's Speak, Memory,[48] the story of his own social and cultural displacment following the Russian revolution; and Isobel Colegate's The Shooting Party.[49]

The literature on hunting and shooting is also explored in some detail here because hunting was Zergenyi's passion, and also because it played a crucial role in shaping his attitudes toward both life and nature. With a few notable exceptions, folklorists have given little heed to the culture and traditions of hunting and the powerful role it plays as a socializing force and activity, particularly the kind of sport or trophy hunting in which Zergenyi was engaged. As such, this material provides a

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[47]See A Time of Gifts (London: John Murray, 1977) and especially Between the Woods and Water (1986; London: Penguin Books, 1988). I would like to thank David Buchan for bringing Fermor's writings to my attention.

[48]Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951).

[49]Isobel Colegate, The Shooting Party (London: Penguin Books, 1980).

window through which we may begin to explore the influences of the class, society, and culture in which Zergenyi was enculturated.

In chapter two I also address the complex questions of ethnographic representation and ethnographic authority that arise when attempting to capture and communicate the significance and meaning which things and events hold for those we study. The chapter closes with a reflective look at these issues through a reflexive discussion of the life history presented.

How we go about constructing ethnographic documents like this one is taken up in chapter three where I discuss research methods. Particular attention is given to the negotiations that characterize encounters between researchers and informants and the implications they ultimately have for the undertaking as a whole. Methodologies are critiqued as are my own assumptions about the nature of making objects and objectifying experience. While a chapter discussing the more general aspects of fieldwork and ethnographic constructions should logically precede the chapter focusing on the specific details of the individual's life, I opted instead to organize the material in this manner because I felt it was important for readers to be introduced to Zergenyi early on in the thesis and to carry with them a sense of who he is as they read about his collection of carved birds.

Chapter four describes carving techniques and repertoire composition and traces Zergenyi's involvement in woodcarving as both a therapeutic and expressive form.

These issues are taken up again and elaborated on in chapter seven which explores the relationship between crisis and creativity.

Until very recently, relatively little serious attention had been given to collecting or collections from a folkloristic perspective, although folklorists have clearly been engaged in collecting throughout the discipline's history. Chapter five examines the literature on collecting and discusses the issues involved in this form of very serious play as a way of framing and interpreting Zergenyi's collection of carved birds. I also discuss the intellectual and cultural climate in which he was educated, both formally and informally, and his personal experiences as a collector, all of which ultimately shaped his ideas about the nature and purpose of collecting.

Chapter six takes up the issue of an artist's relationship to community. Community is replaced here by audience, for the concept of audience is a more workable one in this context. The discussion focuses on the nature of Zergenyi's identification with the audience his carvings actually attracted and the one he imagined as he created the collection.

The concluding chapter examines the relationship between creativity and crisis where creativity is seen as a strategy for dealing with significant changes in life pattern or life cycle. Displaced from home and culture, Zergenyi turned to carving first as diversionary tactic and later, I contend, as a means of fostering integration in a life fragmented by displacement. An epilogue describing my personal stake in this whole endeavor concludes the thesis.

The material upon which this study is based was gathered over a period of years primarily through conversations with Zergenyi and through an examination of the carvings. Maria Doolitte, Zergenyi's daughter, was also an invaluable source of information. In addition, I conducted interviews with several of Zergenyi's friends and acquaintances, a few of which were tape-recorded. I also corresponded with family members and with people who had carvings made by Zergenyi. All materials from letters are reproduced exactly as they were written.

Having said that, a word on the editorial practices employed in the presentation of quoted material is warranted, especially in regard to Zergenyi. He is not a native English speaker. Hungarian is his first language and although he occasionally speaks it in my presence when reprimanding his dog or conversing with his daughter Maria, all of our research was conducted in English. Maria has often remarked how unfortunate it is that I have not been able to communicate with her father in Hungarian only because he is so eloquent in his native tongue. While Zergenyi is an unselfconscious and generally articulate speaker of English, he occasionally inverts, inserts, or deletes words. I have not followed any set rule in representing his spoken words. Instead, my guide was a desire for clarity without sacrificing the cadence and character of his speech. As a result, there are times when I have added words and these appear in square brackets. For example, I inserted "with" in the following quote from Zergenyi: "I was born [with] maybe two dogs sitting beside me." In other

instances, I have made no attempt to alter the semantics as in this example: "I cut only maybe in the hunting lodges bread with my knife."

In altering his speech, I do not intend to lay claim to an authority I do not have or to suggest there is a right way to say anything. However, none of the conversations I had with Zergenyi were tape-recorded. They were recorded by hand and there simply were times when it was impossible for me to capture everything he said verbatim. As such, I cannot go back and listen repeatedly to the conversation until I get the particular quote just right. As a result, I have presented his speech as accurately as I could and when I did not have the material in the form of a quotation, I specifically indicate that the passage is paraphrased. While few would dispute that truly accurate and fully representational transcriptions are almost impossible to produce and when attempted, are almost impossible to read, my decision to present his speech as described was influenced by another factor. My words have benefitted from careful editing over a period of time, Zergenyi's have not. His were spoken during informal conversations when content more than style was the main consideration. Had he been given the same opportunity to reflect on his speech as I have taken to reflect on mine, perhaps he too would have made changes. However, few informants are given a chance to edit transcriptions let alone review ethnographic presentations. While I made an effort to honestly and openly discuss my ideas and interpretations with Zergenyi and also with Maria and even sent the Prologue to him for his reaction, I did not give him the opportunity to read my research notes, nor did I send him drafts

of the thesis. So perhaps I am being somewhat dishonest in not claiming a measure of authority. While I may not intend to assume this authority, in practice I nonetheless do, not only in the representation of his speech, but also in representation of his life and the interpretation his work. Consideration of these issues and others directly relating to the nature and construction of ethnographies and the claiming, or disclaiming, of ethnographic authority are some of the points discussed at the end of the next chapter following the telling of Zergenyi's life history.

CHAPTER TWO

ANDREW ZERGENYI'S LIFE STORY: ITS TELLING AND ITS MAKING

Andrew Zergenyi was nearing eighty-seven when I first met him at his home in Freeville, New York on a hot July day in 1986. Dressed in a jacket and tie, he stood to greet me when I entered the room where he had been seated. He was a striking man, tall and noble in bearing. White whiskers framed his face, still handsome even with the hollowed cheeks and furrowed brow brought on by time and circumstance. I had come to talk to him about his collection of wood carvings, examples of which could be seen all around: resting on tabletops and bookshelves, housed in glass cases and oak cabinets, hung on the walls, and even suspended from the ceiling (fig 2). The carvings were mostly of birds, ranging from common species such as the meadowlark (fig 3) and sparrow hawk (fig 4) to more exotic ones like the quetzal and the toucan (fig 5). Some of the carvings were freestanding; others were perched on branches and platforms, alone or grouped with related species. Most of the carvings were stored upstairs and he sent me up to see them.

I climbed the steep, narrow, and heavily carpeted stairs to the second floor. Hung on the wall of the landing was an impressive, four foot high carving of a bald eagle modelled after the eagle on the Great Seal of the United States. There were

Figure 2. A flock of miniature Canada geese in flight thumbtacked to a bedroom ceiling. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 3. Meadowlark on a carved base. Given to the author. (Dimensions: 4.75 ins. L, 1.25 ins. W at the breast on a 6 in. diameter base.)

Figure 4. Sparrow hawk (Dimensions: 5.25 ins. L, 2.25 ins. W at the breast.)

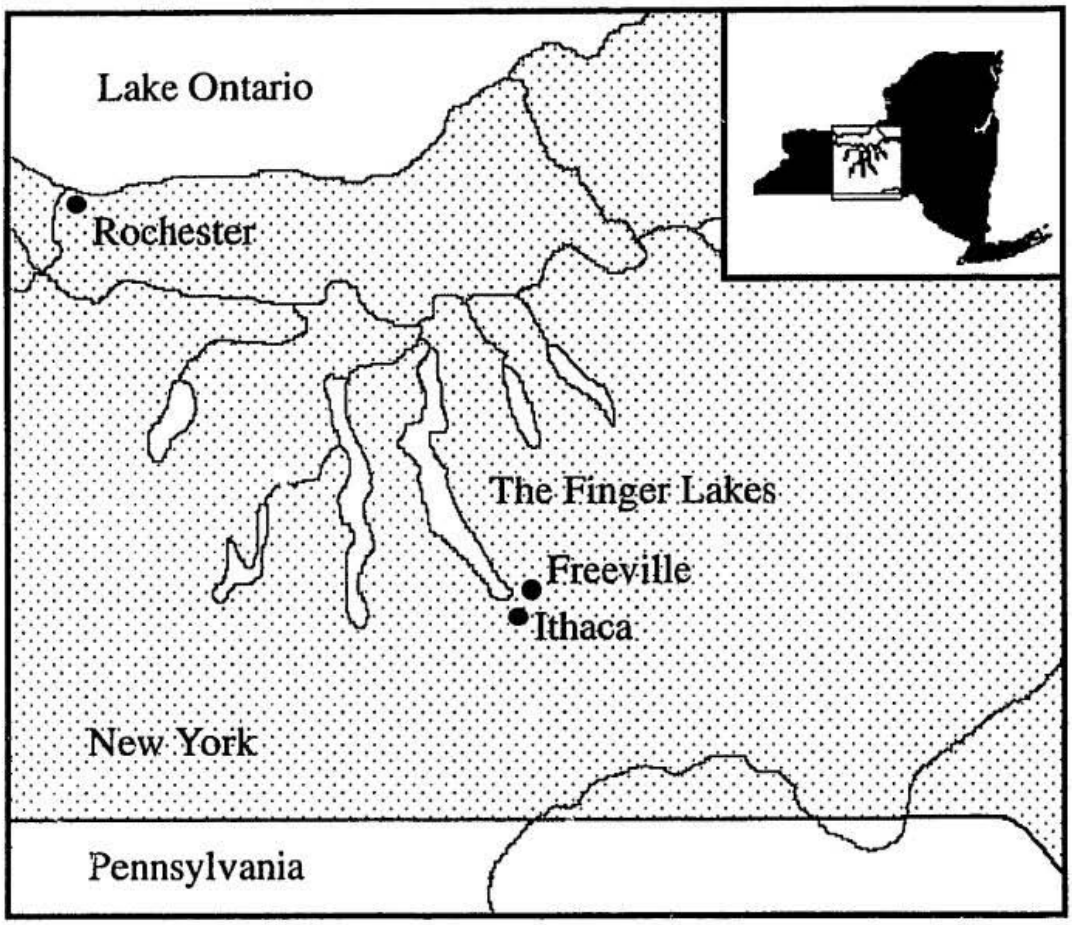
Figure 5. Toucan and queztals.

three rooms on the second floor, two of them bedrooms each with the door held tightly shut by a metal latch. I slipped the hook from the latch and opened the door to find a room filled with carvings layered two and three deep on makeshift shelves lining the walls (fig 6). There were hundreds of brightly colored carvings staring out from their various perches and niches. All had been made by Zergenyi. The second, smaller room had fewer carvings than the first, but its shelves had long since been filled and carvings spilled over on to the single bed that occupied much of the available floor space. I returned downstairs where he waited with his daughter Maria, who was also visiting that day, slightly overwhelmed not only by the fact that one person had produced so much, but also that he had kept it all.

We sat in the cool dark living room, a welcome respite from the July heat, and talked mostly about the carvings and a little about himself. Family pictures along with mass-produced prints of nature scenes, carved and painted plaques, and pencil sketches of his barn and a favorite dog lined the walls of the room. Scattered Catholic icons added to the cluttered ensemble of images. Symbolized in this assemblage of images and objects were ties to family, faith, and former places.

Zergenyi had lived in the area since 1953 and on his small, fifty-acre farm in Freeville since 1954 (Map 1). The long, narrow plot of land which constituted the farm was a mixture of meadows, forests, and marshes (fig 7). Most of the structures on the property including a storey and a half frame house, English style barn, and several outbuildings dated from the nineteenth century. The buildings were clustered

Figure 6. Carvings were stored on shelves lining the walls of two upstairs' bedrooms in Zergenyi's Freeville, NY home.



Map 1. Map of the Finger Lakes region in central New York

Figure 7. The barn on Zergenyi's property in Freeville, NY, July 1989.

along the front of the property close to the road. Mature trees and overgrown shrubs screened the front of the house, almost concealing it from view (fig 8). He had lived alone here since his wife Clara died in 1980, his only steady companion his faithful dog Troy of whom he was extremely fond. Although he had lived on this farm longer than he had lived in any one place during his eighty-seven years, he didn't consider Freeville home. It was a haven, he said, a refuge, but not a place where he belonged.[1] The place he did consider home was located thousands of miles from this upstate New York farm. He had left that home some almost fifty years earlier and it was one which for him effectively existed only in his memories.

Andrew Zergenyi was born in Budapest, Hungary on July 31, 1899, the only child of Arthur and Margaret Zergenyi. When he was in his early teens, his family moved to Vrŝac in the southeastern section of Hungary where his father worked for the Hungarian National Bank (Map 2). They lived there until 1918 when that portion of southern Hungary was annexed to Yugoslavia in the post-war border realignments of the Eastern European countries. From there they moved to Sopron, a city bordering Austria in the northwest of Hungary, where Arthur Zergenyi's family had lived for years.

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[1]The idea of belonging to a place as opposed to simply residing in one is thoughtfully addressed by Gerald L. Pocius in A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland (Athens: U of Georgia P; 1991) 18-19, 22-25.

Figure 8. A side view of Zergenyi's home in Freeville, NY, July 1986.

Map 2. Map of Hungary and surrounding areas with places of residence indicated

Andrew finished school in Vršac and in 1917 enlisted in the armed services. A brief foray in the air force--where his deadly accurate marksmanship gained him quite a reputation--was cut short by his repeated air sickness. Following this assignment, he was made a communications officer and spent the remainder of the war at the front lines. During the course of his service he received one bronze and three silver stars for acts of bravery in the line of duty. In recognition of his valor, he was inducted into an elite society of Hungarian war heroes, the Order of the Gallants, and given the title vitéz Zergenyi.[2]

After the war, he enrolled in the Agricultural Academy of Keszthely located near Lake Balaton. He completed his studies in agriculture in 1923 and was employed by the Agricultural Industries Company, Ltd. For the first three years he worked as an assistant manager on a twenty thousand acre model farm and then spent a year managing one of the company's smaller holdings in the Near East. In 1927 he was promoted to principal officer of the company and acted as managing director first of a farm in Kaposvar and then, from 1939-1945, of a twenty thousand acre agricultural complex near Galanta, a rural town in the northwest corner of Hungary. This complex consisted of sugar and flour mills, distilleries, and a cannery, all of which processed products raised on site. Zergenyi summarized the activities of this farming enterprise in a statement he wrote in late 1946. Quoted as written, it reads:

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[2]For a brief description of this Order see Andrew C. Janos, The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1982) 252.

> I was responsible for the production of these estates of 20,000 acres with a staff of 12 managers and 1 Supervisor. The industries of the estates were under my management as well. The Sugar Mill had a production capacity of 1,200 waggons, The Canning Factory 600 waggons annual output. The Flour Mill 6 waggons daily output and 3 industrial distilleries. The estate benefitted greatly out of the harmonious collaboration of its industries and agricultural production. The Canning Factory was well supplied by vegetables, grown on a well drained territory of 800 acres. Besides this, the estate produced vegetable seeds for export. Special vegetable seeds were cultivated on two experimental stations and the best were adopted for further production. I attached great importance to the oilseed production, by constant experimenting, I was looking for those varieties which contained the highest quantity of vegetable oil. I was lecturing very often about oilseed production, in Hungary, which lectures have been published as well.
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> In 1937 I was distinguished by the Hungarian Government, in the Roll of Honour, by granting me the title of Royal Counsellor of Agriculture.
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> In 1939 I have been elected Vice-Chairman of the Agricultural Chamber of Kiselfold, which enabled me to participate directly in the agricultural production of Northern Hungary, especially in the connection with the oilseed production.
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> Besides the Agricultural production, considerable number of livestock was bred. The attested Swiss herd, numbered 1,200 cows. Our livestock won several first prizes in agricultural exhibitions, both in Hungary and abroad. The poultry-farm which I started in 1943, within two years, became one of the five biggest poultry farms of Hungary.[3]

More recently Zergenyi has described his occupational life in Hungary in more modest terms. When I asked him about his occupation in Hungary he said, "I was a farmer. I had two big farms."[4] Although his parents had hoped that he would become a banker like his father, the farming profession was a natural choice for him given that

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[3]Andrew Zergenyi, "Summary of my Agricultural Activities," ts., 1.

[4]Notes, 16 May 1990, 3.

he was "interested in everything out-of-doors."[5] "I was always in my life outside. As a student, if I had ten minutes, I went out," he said and then described his feeling of impatience when confined to a desk as one of "sitting on a porcupine always."[6] Working for the agricultural company provided the perfect employment situation for Zergenyi, giving him the opportunity to be in the milieu he desired, to explore the natural world about which he was tremendously curious, and most importantly to readily pursue his consuming passion: hunting.[7]

Arthur Zergenyi played a major role in shaping his son's attitudes toward the natural world. Zergenyi cited his father as the single greatest influence in his life, saying on one occasion, "he was my best friend."[8] His father taught him how to look at nature, how to identify plants and wildlife, how to shoot, and how to hunt. "He did everything in the woods," Andrew recalled and some of his fondest memories are of the times he spent hunting in the woods and mountains with his father.[9]

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[5]Notes, 23 June 1989, 2.

[6]Notes, 12 July 1989, 3.

[7]A distinction between hunting and shooting is not made here as Zergenyi hunted almost exclusively with guns. James Howe contrasts hunting and shooting based on the latter's association with "exclusivity and class conflict." Hunting, he argues, is by design a more democratic sport, in "Fox Hunting as Ritual," American Ethnologist 8 (1981): 285. For a discussion of the differences between hunting and shooting see Michael Brander, Hunting and Shooting (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971).

[8]Maria Zergenyi Doolittle, letter to the author, 24 February 1991. See also Notes, 3 July 1989, 1.

[9]Notes, 7 January 1992, 4.

Zergenyi, like many boys of his class and era, was only a child when he received his first gun.[10] It was an air gun given to him by his father when he was five or six years old. He became quite accomplished in its use. A few years later he was given as a confirmation[11] present an Austrian-made double barrel shot gun, in itself a rite of passage for the young man. Andrew's interest in guns grew steadily and he began collecting them by the time he was as a teenager. He recalled, "as a child, fourteen or fifteen years old, since then I had the desire to have some special guns."[12] By the time he was an adult he had amassed quite an impressive collection of arms, one he recently estimated would be worth thirty or forty thousand dollars in today's market.

Andrew's father encouraged his son's development as a marksman and set up a shooting range in the backyard where he could hone his skills as a marksman. The young Zergenyi became an accomplished shooter and as a teenager he was invited to represent Hungary in the Olympic rapid-fire pistol shooting competitions. Although

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[10]For those inclined toward hunting, the receipt of their first gun and their early experiences using it are indelibly inscribed in their memories. Aldo Leopold, a contemporary of Zergenyi's, writes: ". . . my earliest impressions of wildlife and its pursuit retain a vivid sharpness of form, color, and atmosphere that half a century of professional wildlife experience has failed to obliterate or improve upon," A Sand County Almanac (New York: Oxford UP, 1949) 120.

[11]Andrew's religious background was mixed. His father was Lutheran, his mother Catholic. Most of his education was in public schools, except fifth and sixth grade in a Lutheran school. The Zergenyis "seemed very ecumenical" Maria wrote in a letter to me, 24 February 1991.

[12]Notes, 17 May 1990, 4.

flattered by the offer, he declined on the grounds that he couldn't spare the time to properly prepare. Andrew much preferred the ambience of the woods and the challenge of bagging live game to that of the shooting range and its stationary target.

On his days off from school he would often take an early morning train to the hunting grounds, spend all day in the woods, and then return later that same evening. Zergenyi's daughter Maria recalled from stories she had heard:

> Both he and my grandfather spent a good deal of time when he was a teenager. My grandfather of course being a banker kept banker's hours and I think he was done at his office at two or three o'clock--and almost daily then they would take a walk and go out and do some hunting.[13]

While the Zergenyis held education in the highest esteem, formal instruction did not always take priority as Andrew recently recalled. On the occasion of a state visit by King Alphonso XIII of Spain, whose reputation as a superb hunter was acclaimed across the continent, Zergenyi's father told him to miss school and attend the procession in order that he might catch a glimpse of this great hunter. Andrew's vivid recollections of the day attest to its significance in his life.

The days of excused absence from school were rare, but Andrew was very clever in avoiding other, less desirable lessons. He smiled fondly as he recalled a brief collusion with his piano teacher. Zergenyi's mother was a gifted pianist and had arranged lessons for her young son who frankly wanted to be elsewhere. One day, quite unexpectedly he said, she asked him to play for her and his performance was so

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[13]Maria Doolittle, tape-recorded correspondence to the author, 1 April 1992.

poor that she demanded an explanation. Preferring to have his afternoons free to hunt, he said, he would shoot a couple of hares or pheasants which he then gave to his instructor in exchange for cancelling the lesson and keeping quiet about their arrangement. The teacher, benefitting all around, was a willing accomplice and it was probably to her greatest dismay that the ruse was discovered and the lessons discontinued altogether. Zergenyi laughs as he recalls this childhood trickery, especially given his current fondness for a small electric organ he keeps on a table by his chair and plays by ear, picking out the pieces he recalls hearing his mother play during his childhood.

Around the age of ten or twelve Zergenyi began accompanying his father on overnight hunting expeditions where they would stay in primitive hunting lodges. Various people would join them including guides, gamekeepers, and assistants to carry cartridges and game. Often rounding out the entourage, depending on the animals hunted, would be several dogs which, for Zergenyi, were as much companions as aides in the hunt. "I always had dogs. I was born [with] maybe two dogs sitting beside me," he said smiling.[14]

These hunting excursions were an opportunity for the younger Zergenyi to gain proficiency in outdoor skills through observation and hands-on experience. In addition to teaching his son the practical aspects of hunting, Zergenyi's father also instilled in him principles of good sportsmanship. "I was always a good shot," Zergenyi recalled,

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[14]Notes, 7 January 1991, 2.

"and if I couldn't shoot a place that I could kill, I didn't shoot as I didn't want the animal to suffer. I learned this from my father."[15] Hunting also provided the perfect venue to encourage development of other qualities and to build character by teaching rules for living based on naturalistic examples and experiences. It was here that the young men were taught patience, fairness, courage, and independence, where they gained strength of body (and mind) and developed endurance, and where good judgement, compassion, and a respect for the natural order were instilled.[16] These were skills that would be useful in maneuvering successfully in social and cultural worlds as well as in the natural one as they were intended not only to make the boy a skilled hunter, but also a fine human being.

Many of Zergenyi's contemporaries experienced a similar education in the classroom of nature, as had their fathers before them, because hunting was not simply viewed by the members of this class as a leisure time pursuit, but also as a means to prepare young men for their future roles, especially for service in the military.[17] The

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[15]Notes, 18 May 1990, 7. See Leopold 178 ff.

[16]A young man's coming of age in the context of hunting is described in William Faulkner's The Bear. The story closes with Issac McCaslin remembering that "afternoon six years ago when Sam led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be child," in The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction, R.V. Cassill, ed., shorter 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990) 355.

[17]This is not meant to imply that the lessons of life learned in the woods are tied to a particular social class or historical time. As Robert Bethke notes in his study of Adirondack woodsmen, "In general, working class men who grow up in the foothills are expected to be at home in the woods. . . . In the woods individual men and groups of peers confront natural phenomena, self, and other men on male terms." In

Greek philosopher Xenophon wrote on the advantages of participation in the sport of hunting:

> Men who love sport will reap therefrom no small advantage for they will gain bodily health, better sight, better hearing and a later old age. Above all, it is an excellent training for war. In the first place, such men, if required to make a trying march on bad road under arms, will not break down; they will stand the strain because they are accustomed to go a hunting wild animals with arms in their hands. Secondly, they will be able to sleep on a hard bed and keep good watch over the post entrusted to them.
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> In advance against any enemy they will be competent both to attack and to obey orders, for it is thus that wild animals are taken. If they are in vain, they will stick to their posts, for they will have learned steadfastness; and in a rout of the enemy they will be able, being used to such things, to press him over every kind of ground. If their own side be beaten they will be able to save themselves and others without dishonour, in marshy, precipitous or otherwise dangerous ground, for from experience they will be quite at home in it.
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> Men like these, even when the greater part of their army has been routed, have rallied and fought against the victorious enemy when astray in difficult ground, and beaten them by their courage and endurance.[18]

Adirondack Voices (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1981) 38.

[18]Quoted in Hunting and Conservation, edited by George Bird Grinnell and Charles Sheldon (New Haven: Yale UP, 1925) v. Many of the books written on hunting comment on the values of hunting skills and experiences in the education of a young man, especially its usefulness in preparing him for military service. See, for example, Simon Blow, Fields Elysian (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1983) 47; Brander, Hunting and Shooting; Georg Hackr..ann, Hunting in the Old World (Hannover: M.u.H. Schaper, 1948) 11; John M. MacKenzie, The Empire of Nature (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988); and Jose Ortega y Gasset, Meditations on Hunting, trans. by Howard B. Westcott (New York: Charles ɜ cribner's Sons, 1972). Pierre Bourdieu comments "sport is conceived of as training in courage and manliness" in "Sport and Social Class," in Rethinking Popular Culture, eds. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 360.

These qualities were mentioned by Zergenyi himself when he described his experiences during the first world war. As a communications officer he and his command were often at the front lines where they saw much action. Maintaining open and working lines of communication was crucial but often difficult and dangerous work which took the men close to actual fighting. As the officer in charge, Zergenyi was empowered to appoint men to go to the front lines and make the necessary repairs, but he emphasized that he never sent them alone, that he always accompanied his soldiers on their missions. Courage, fairness, and a sense of duty, learned in the fields and woods while hunting with his father, informed Zergenyi's decisions and actions as an officer.

Gaining the knowledge and skills to be a good hunter took years of observation and instruction. And while present on many hunts throughout his teens, Zergenyi was eighteen before he shot his first stag. "This was a privilege to shoot these," he said, adding he had to finish high school before being allowed this honor[19] (fig 9). In order to earn the right to shoot a stag, the hunter had to acquire the qualities symbolically associated with it: power, independence, dominance.[20] Thus, shooting the stag, like

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[19]Notes, 18 May 1990, 6. Patrick Leigh Fermor, a young Englishman on a walking tour of Europe in the early 1930s, describes a ceremony enacted in Austria marking this event in a young hunter's life. See A Time of Gifts (London: John Murray, 1977), 141.

[20]See MacKenzie 32.

Figure 9. Zergenyi with a stag, Vzsa, Hungary, 1944. Photographer unknown.

receiving his first gun, was a significant milestone in his coming of age as a hunter, marking as it must have the completion of his apprenticeship.

Hunting became the young man's passion and years later, perusing a copy of Medieval Hunting Scenes based on the hunting experiences of Gaston Phoebus who lived in the fourteenth century,[21] he reflected, "He [Phoebus] was interested in hunting, arms, and ladies. I was in the same category as he." Pausing for a few seconds he said bemusedly, "maybe except for the ladies."[22] He pursued this passion with dedication both in the woods and in the library.[23] Ever curious about the world around him, Zergenyi read widely, but he was especially informed on the topic of hunting. "It has a tremendous literature the hunting" and he himself had over three hundred books on the subject in Hungarian, German, and English.[24] Perhaps second only to hunting was his interest in ornithology, an avocation also passed down from father to son. The young Zergenyi combined his two primary interests when he began

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[21]Medieval Hunting Scenes (Fribourg-Genève: Productions Liber SA, 1978) by Gabriel Bise after Gaston Phoebus and translated by J. Peter Tallon is based on the fourteenth century manuscript "The Book of Hunting" written by Phoebus. This edition includes reproductions of the splendid hunting images featured on the illuminated manuscripts in existence from the fifteenth century.

[22]Notes, 17 July 1991, 1.

[23]Others of his contemporaries did the same. Vladamir Nabokov, whose passion was for the collection and study of butterflies, writes of carrying from the attic "glorious loads of fantastically attractive" scientific treatises which, among other publications, he "voraciously" read. See Speak, Memory (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951) 82.

[24]Notes, 17 July 1991, 1.

collecting birds for museums. He recalled, "I started collecting for the museums [as a] high school boy, collecting for the museums. Hundreds and hundreds of birds."[25] He continued to collect through his university years and did so even during his year long sojourn in Turkey with the agricultural firm.

As a young man, Zergenyi acquired an impressive knowledge of ornithology, an accomplishment recognized and rewarded by his admission into the Royal Hungarian Ornithological Society before the age of twenty. His work with the Society primarily involved the banding of birds for the purposes of tracking migration patterns. He banded hundreds of birds, he said, mostly shorebirds such as night herons, gray herons, spoonbills, ibis, and storks. Also in his capacity as a Society member, Zergenyi was involved in hosting T. Gilbert Pearson, former president of the National Audubon Society, on the Hungarian leg of his 1920s tour of Europe to promote international cooperation in wildlife management. Little could he realize the significance of that acquaintance in the years to come.

Collecting specimens for museums infused Zergenyi's passion for hunting with an added purpose. "I couldn't hunt only for killing something," he said. "You had to

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[25]Notes, 17 July 1991, 7. Zergenyi was not unusual in combining hunting and collecting for museums. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, himself a devotee of the hunt, was also involved in collecting various specimens for museums in Vienna. One of his biographers writes, "like many passionate hunters, the Archduke was an almost equally passionate collector." Gordon Brook-Shepherd, Archduke of Sarajevo (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984) 25.

hunt something for a reason."[26] Putting food on the table was not his motivation, however. In fact, he is quite candid about his distaste for most of the game he hunted. "I don't eat any game. I don't like it. Sometimes a piece of rabbit, but not too much [pausing], sometimes a hare. I don't like game."[27] On other occasions he has admitted that wild boar is very delicious, but most of what Zergenyi shot was eaten by someone else. Sometimes the meat would be given to the parish priest to be distributed among the local villagers, other times it was given directly to them or to acquaintances of Zergenyi's. As well, game shot on the agricultural complex he managed was often processed in the company's canneries. The distribution of meat bagged during large hunting parties varied. Portions would be given to the hunt organizer, the hunters, the gamekeepers, the beaters, and other participants.[28] Typically, Zergenyi kept for himself only the trophy portions of the animal.

Every month but one offered good hunting in Zergenyi's native country. "In Hungary, only June [is] not a good month for hunting," he said.[29] He hunted hares in

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[26]Notes, 7 January 1991, 1. Georg Hackmann obliquely addresses the question of the waste and decadence in sport and trophy hunting by deflecting attention from the issue of the alleged senseless slaughter of animals and focusing it instead on the qualities of the hunter. He writes, "To kill means to murder; every sportsman would detest killing," 16.

[27]Notes, 16 May 1990, 2.

[28]The apportionment of game is described by William Twiti, huntsman to King Edward II, in his fourteenth century treatise The Art of Hunting, ed. Bror Danielsson (Stockholm: Amquist & Wiskell International, 1977) 13, 18.

[29]Notes, 17 July 1991, 1.

January, foxes in February, woodcock in March, capercaillie in April, and the bustard in May.[30] July brought roebucks, August partridges and young ducks. Stags were hunted in September (fig 10), fallow deer, pheasants, and rabbits in October, muflon in November (fig 11), and hare again in December. Boar could be hunted year around (fig 12), bear in the spring and fall. In addition, he hunted grouse, badgers, chamois, and wolf. Zergenyi had at least one trophy from every type of animal he had hunted and, in some cases, he had several (fig 13). He estimated that his collection of roebuck antlers alone numbered somewhere around two hundred.

Acquiring such large collections of hunting trophies was hardly a democratic pursuit. "In Europe, there is the property and with the property goes the hunting. Hunting is a very expensive hobby," Zergenyi noted. In addition to the costs of purchasing or leasing and then maintaining land on which to hunt, the hunter bore the costs of licensing each gun he might use as well as the expense of retaining the services of one or more gamekeepers. Stocking the land with game was also a potential cost. As a result of the large expense involved, Zergenyi observed that "in Hungary, mostly the aristocrats were hunting."[31] Venetia Newall makes the same observation concerning hunting in England writing:

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[30]According to Brander, by the late 1800s Hungary was one of the few places left to hunt the bustard as it had been decimated earlier in the century in Britain, Scandinavia, and Central Europe. He writes, "In the vast estates in Hungary they might be shot in the course of a hunt organized by some aristocratic owner, but few people received invitations to shoot there," 136.

[31]Notes, 17 July 1991, 1.

Figure 10. Zergenyi with stag, Bakony Mountain, Hungary, 1942.
Photographer unknown.

Figure 11. Zergenyi with a muflon ram, Carpathian Mountains, 1943. Photographer unknown.

Figure 12. Zergenyi with wild boars, Carpathian Mountains, 1942. Photographer unknown.

Figure 13. Detail of the game room in Zergenyi's home in Galanta, Hungary, c. 1943. A great bustard bird can be seen in the center of the photo.

> During the Middle Ages and later hunting was an aristocratic diversion. . . . Today the correlation of pastime and class remains largely unchanged, because hunting was, and still is, an expensive sport.[32]

Zergenyi went on to compare hunting in the Europe of his day to the hunting he witnessed in the United States. He contended that "in America the only democratic thing is the hunting and the Wall Street. This is democratic, nothing else." When I asked him why he replied, "because . . . it costs nothing."[33] While Zergenyi was not an aristocrat (although his wife was descended from an aristocratic family),[34] as a member of Hungary's upper class he certainly had the means to finance his hunting activities.

The relationship of hunting rights to wealth and class was a complex one and property ownership was not the only factor controlling access to game.[35] In many instances strict game laws severely restricted the hunting of various species of wildlife--even for those who owned or leased land on which these animals foraged. John MacKenzie described the "progressive restriction of social access to hunting" as an "enduring theme of hunting in a wide range of societies." One result of this trend

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[32]Venetia Newall, "The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Some Comments on Fox Hunting," Folklore 94 (1983): 86.

[33]Notes, 17 July 1991, 1.

[34]Maria emphasized that her father was not an aristocrat, that he was not independently wealthy, but rather worked for a living, albeit in the professional ranks. Personal communication, 8 July 1993.

[35]Hackmann briefly explains the history of hunting rights and land ownership in Europe from the eighth century to the nineteenth, 11-13. See as well Brander 136.

toward exclusivity was a shift in attitude toward game "from utility to inutility, and often from edibility to inedibility."[36] While there is not room here to fully explore the issue of hunting and class in Europe,[37] the implications are clear. Hunting was not an activity open to all equally. With few exceptions, the privileged who hunted for sport were distinctly advantaged over those who hunted as a means of feeding their family or supplementing their income.[38]

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[36]MacKenzie 10.

[37]E.P Thompson takes up this very issue in Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of The Black Act (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), where he discusses unequal access to game, especially deer, and other natural resources of the forests and fields. The Black Act not only imposed severe restrictions on all but a few privileged hunters, it also put in place stiff penalties, including capital punishment, for violators of the game laws. See also Douglas Hay, "Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase," Albion's Fatal Tree, eds. Douglas Hay, et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) 189-253, who explores the response of the lower classes to the tightening of the game laws in eighteenth century England.

[38]Conflicts in hunting rights and access to game were not limited to Europe, as Edward D. Ives demonstrates in George Magoon and the Down East Game War (Illinois: U of Urbana P, 1988) where he describes the imposition of increasingly restrictive game laws in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Maine, the attempts to enforce them by newly appointed game wardens, and the local resistance to these laws by hunters such as George Magoon and Wilbur Day. See also Edward D. Ives, ed., Wilbur Day (1864-1924), Hunter, Guide, and Poacher: An Autobiography, Northeast Folklore 26 (1985) for an account of the situation from Day's perspective. Darrin McGrath takes up related issues in a contemporary context in "Poaching in Newfoundland and Labrador: The Creation of an Issue," M.A. thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1992. McGrath argues that poaching emerged as an issue in Newfoundland in the 1980s not because of increased poaching activities, but because of the government's interest in promoting outdoor tourism, part of which involved non-resident sport hunting.

At times Zergenyi participated in the kind of large organized hunts, so brilliantly portrayed in Isobel Colegate's novel The Shooting Party, where beaters drove game toward the waiting guns of hunters, often resulting in bag counts in the hundreds[39] (fig 14). He preferred, however, to hunt alone. Setting out alone or in the company of a single gamekeeper and relying on his own skills in tracking and capturing the game was a much more desirable form of hunting for him. "That was my favorite thing," he said.[40] Vladamir Nabokov, a contemporary of Zergenyi's, who was an avid collector of butterflies, articulates a similar passion for pursuit of wildlife and the desire for solitude as the quest is undertaken:

> Few things indeed have I known in the way of emotion or appetite, ambition or achievement, that could surpass in richness and strength the excitement of entomological exploration. From the very first it had a great many intertwinkling facets. One of them was the acute desire to be alone, since any companion, no matter how quiet, interfered with the concentrated enjoyment of my mania. Its gratification admitted of no compromise or exception.[41]

Nabokov's comments underscore the complex nature of the avocations in which these men were engaged. For Zergenyi, the sport of hunting was not found in killing

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[39]Isobel Colegate, The Shooting Party (London: Penguin Books, 1980). Zergenyi recalled one January hunt where six hundred beaters drove game for twenty or so hunters, culminating in the bagging of sixteen hundred hares in a single day--the most, he said, ever taken in one day. He alone has shot a staggering two hundred and fifty pheasants in a single day. According to G. T. Teasdale-Buckell, large bags of hares were quite common in Hungary. In The Complete Shot, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1907) 324ff.

[40]Notes, 17 July 1991, 2.

[41]Nabokov 84.

Figure 14. A single day's shooting culminated in the bagging of sixteen hundred hares, some of which can be seen here. Diószeg, Hungary, 1942. Photographer: Andrew Zergenyi.

animals driven towards his waiting gun by scores of beaters rousing the game from coverts and burrows. His pleasure and satisfaction resulted from its more sublime features. Certainly he took pride in his success as a hunter and his skills as a marksman, as his hundreds of trophies attest, but the nature of his passion for the sport derived from an intense involvement with nature. David Wilson Scofield's description of the naturalist beautifully captures Zergenyi's feelings toward the natural world. He writes:

> Nature is present to naturalists the way God is to saints or the past is to humanists--not simply as a matter of fact but as an insistent and live reality . . . every detail seems significant and its *gestalt* feels compelling. It is like the difference between those who encounter a poem as an "affecting presence" and those who simply see it only as a batch of words, perhaps documenting a mental state, but otherwise empty of special worth.[42]

When hunting on his own Zergenyi's skills in the natural world were set against those of the animal. Success relied on a keen awareness of and attentiveness to his surroundings such that hunting became, in Ortega y Gasset's words, "a contest or confrontation between two systems of instincts." He goes on to say that

> it is understandable that a very accomplished hunter should consider the supreme form of hunting that in which the hunter, alone in the mountains, is at the same time the person who discovers the prey, the one who pursues it, and the one who fells it.[43]

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[42]David Wilson Scofield, In the Presence of Nature (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1978) 1.

[43]Ortega y Gasset 59 and 76-77. In The Goshawk (1951; Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), T.H. White describes the contest of wit and endurance between man and animal in his attempt to tame and control the wild hawk. Erika Brady comments on the Ozark trapper's "ability to not only think like an animal but to interpret

Zergenyi himself spoke of his abilities in the woods in terms of instinct. "I have been so much in the woods," he said, "I have instinct like the swallow."[44]

Some of his fondest memories of hunting are of the challenges faced in hunting elusive prey where the capture depended not only on good marksmanship, but also on knowledge of the game, its habits, and habitat. One such challenging quarry is the capercaillie, a relatively large bird with keen eyesight, which he would spend weeks hunting every year. Success in bagging a capercaillie relied on steady nerves for the hunter could advance only when the bird sounded its mating call at which point it would close its eyes. The slightest movement at the wrong moment would send this cautious bird flying for safer perches. In his years as a hunter, Zergenyi shot only a few capercaillie, recalling it was as much "a pleasure to see them" as it was to shoot them (fig 15). For him, hunting was as much "a frame for interacting with wildlife . . . as a way of taking it."[45]

The ease he felt in the natural world was not matched in the social one. While the challenges of the hunt were exhilarating, the challenges of the drawing room were

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information in field and on riverbank through its eyes." In "Mankind's Thumb on Nature's Scale: Trapping and Regional Identity in the Missouri Ozarks," Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures, eds. Barbara Allen and Thomas J. Schlereth (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1990) 69. See as well Tad Tuleja, "The Turkey," in Gillespie and Mechling 27.

[44]Notes, January 7, 1992, 2.

[45]Mary Hufford, One Space, Many Places (Washington: The Library of Congress, 1986) 80.

Figure 15. Zergenyi holding a capercaillie in each hand. Aspang, Austria, 1937. Photographer unknown.

enervating. I once remarked to Maria that her father must have been very popular young bachelor, she retorted he couldn't have as he was always in the woods. He himself has often remarked that he "wasn't very good with the ladies" and recalled once spending hours in a carriage with a comely young woman discussing at length the nature and habits of the June bug. He laughed at himself and his awkwardness as he told the story. Although a shy man and one quite content in his own company, Zergenyi did socialize enough to meet Clara von Svastics zv Bocsár who was to become his wife. They were married on October 30, 1930 in Szentgáloskér in the chapel of Clara's parents' country home. A year later they became the parents of a daughter, Maria, their only child.

Clara was a talented pianist and a good horsewoman, but she did not share her husband's passion for hunting or the outdoors. Speaking about his wife Zergenyi said, "She doesn't like birds like I do. I was happy if I see a grouse. She didn't care."[46] One thing the couple did share was a devotion to their daughter and the intensity of the bond between father and daughter remains evident to this day.

Zergenyi attempted to teach his daughter to hunt as his father had taught him when he was a child. A special gun, with reduced dimensions to facilitate handling by a child, was made for Maria. Like her father she enjoyed the outdoors, but she said she felt "sorry for the game" and recalled, "at the age of twelve I shot four hares and

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[46]Notes, 19 May 1990, 3.

cried afterwards!"[47] Her hunting lessons quickly came to a close, much to her father's dismay.

The Zergenyis lived first in Kaposvar where Maria was born and later, in 1939, moved to Galanta. Both Maria and her father recall these days as relatively happy and secure ones. The farm was prosperous and the family was well looked after by the household's six servants including Maria's governess, a young half-Jewish woman from a nearby town. While the eruption of war in Europe would come to affect them in many ways,[48] they were still able to maintain some semblance of normalcy in their daily lives. For example, Zergenyi continued to hunt during these times both alone, as he so liked, and as the leader of large, organized hunts where sportsmen of various nationalities would be invited to the complex for a day's or weekend's shooting (fig 16). But by 1944, the south and westward advancement of the Russian front posed a threat perceived to be far greater than that of the already present Germans,[49] who were

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[47]Maria Doolittle, letter to the author, 8 May 1992.

[48]One of the most difficult experiences for the family was the sense of helplessness they felt when the Jewish governess was deported. It is a painful memory for them and although it is assuaged somewhat by the knowledge that she did survive the Holocaust, to this day Zergenyi questions the choices he made and wonders if he had acted differently would he have been able to prevent her deportation altogether.

[49]It was Russia after all which played a crucial role in defeating the 1848 Hungarian independence movement by pledging military support to Austria. Anti-Russian sentiments, fueled by fear and mistrust, continued to mount through the nineteenth century. See Jörg K. Hoensch, A History of Modern Hungary 1867-1986, trans. Kim Traynor (London and New York: Longman, 1988) 1-10, 48-58.

Figure 16. A hunting party and their quarry of hares and pheasants, Röjtök (near Sopron), Hungary, late 1930s. Party unknown. Photographer: Andrew Zergenyi.

less feared but not openly welcomed by Zergenyi.[50] And although the soldiers were a constant presence on the farm by the early 1940s, Maria recalled that no German officer ever crossed the threshold of their home. Zergenyi may have been compelled to be civil to the occupying Germans in his professional capacity as the manager of the agricultural complex, but he obviously was not inclined to cultivate more personal relationships. Describing her father as the "least political person" she knows, Maria reflected on his actions during that period and observed that he was, in essence, forced to chose between the lesser of two evils. In reality, he had little choice at all. As the Russians advanced into Hungary and the Nazis secured their stranglehold on the Hungarian government,[51] it ' me increasingly apparent that the Allied forces were winning the war. History was being repeated; Hungary was once again finding itself aligned with the losing side.

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[50]Although Hungary and Germany were linked by their common struggle to revise the terms of the Paris Peace Treaties following the first world war, relations between the two countries in the interwar period were strained and often contentious. Hungary's alliance with Germany came out of a foreign policy dominated by revisionist aims spurred on by a fervent nationalism. See Eva S. Balogh, "Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1918-1945," The Hungarians: A Divided Nation, ed. Stephen Borsody, Yale Russian and East European Publications, No. 7 (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988) 59-65; Hoensch 84-145; and Steven Béla Várdy, "The Impact of Trianon Upon the Hungarian Mind: The Nature of Interwar Hungarian Irredentism," The Austro-Hungarian Mind: At Home and Abroad, eds. Steven Béla Várdy and Agnes Huszár Várdy (Boulder: East European Monographs, No. CCLIV, 1989) 149-167.

[51]While March 19, 1944 is the date of Germany's official occupation of Hungary, the Nazis had been exerting a controlling influence long before that. See Hoensch 131-160.

Looking back, Maria felt that perhaps her parents, along with many others, had hoped, rather naively, that a German victory would ultimately result in a restored Hungary, while they feared a Russian conquest would ensure insufferable changes, not only politically and ideologically, but also socially and culturally. It is difficult for Zergenyi to talk about these days; the memory of them is extremely painful for him. At the same time, he can't help but talk about them as the events that followed radically changed his life.

Galanta, the small town where the Zergenyis were living, was near the borders of both Austria and Czechoslovakia, and as the war raged on more and more Hungarians passed through as they fled the country. Thousands and thousands of people passed by the farm he managed. Some were being evacuated, others were leaving on their own, and most feared the consequences of the Russian invasion. People travelling by train, by horse-drawn carriages, and by foot would stop at the farm requesting food. "I have so much food I could feed two or three infantry divisions," he said. "I had terrible much food."[52] And while the farm did supply the military, Zergenyi himself surreptiously provided food for refugees from the farm's well-stocked storage facilities, although in doing so he was disobeying company regulations and defying Nazi command. Given that the production and distribution of food is as strategically important to a war effort as the manufacture of armaments,

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[52]Notes, 17 May 1990, 2-3.

tightly controlling the output of this centrally located agricultural facility was essential.[53] All transactions and shipments of foodstuffs to and from the farm were strictly monitored by German soldiers who guarded the premises. I do not know how Zergenyi evaded the German guards as he smuggled food to the refugees; however, I do know that had he been caught the consequences for him, and likely for his family as well, would most certainly have been dire.

In late 1944, Mrs. Zergenyi and Maria gathered a few of the family's belongings and went to nearby Znaim (now Znojmo) in the now former Czechoslovakia where it was thought they would be safer. Maria recalled their departure:

> Essentially everything was left behind. And we just brought out suitcases of things--clothing, mostly warm clothing because it was winter. It was December when my mother and I left. And a few pieces of silver, but essentially all their possessions were left behind. You just couldn't bring that much out. . . . Apparently my father had gone out ahead of time to a town called, to a town called Znaim in [Czechoslovakia] and made arrangements for us to stay at this particular hotel and that's where we went to the first time.[54]

Zergenyi vividly remembers the events leading up to their evacuation. An American plane flew over the town and dropped leaflets announcing the advance of the Russian front into Austria and

> so as I found this paper, my wife and Maria had been in Znaim, Czechoslovakia. So I run to them. There was no gasoline. We distilled the

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[53]Under the terms of an October 194[illegible] agreement, Germany obtained access to an increased portion of Hungarian agricultural output. In Hoensch 149.

[54]Doolittle, tape, 1 April 1992.

> raw oil from the tractors because it has thirty percent gasoline and we take out twenty percent from the fuel. This was against the law. So I went there and told them you have to move from here. . . . This was our luck. I cannot tell you Melissa how terrible this was.[55]

They remained in Znaim for a few weeks and then moved to Salapulka in Austria where they stayed for only a brief period. From Salapulka, Maria and her mother went to Altmunster, a small town in Austria some thirty miles southwest of Linz, joining many other Hungarian refugees. Although there was a refugee camp in Altmunster, the Zergenyis did not stay there. Instead, they found lodgings in an old manor house owned and run by a Countess Schaftgotsch. Maria recalled:

> We stayed with a lady who was a countess . . . and her name is Schaftgotsch and they had one of these old Austrian manor houses and . . . they were not a wealthy family at all. . . . This was a very beautiful area and when we got there it was full of Hungarian refugees. I can't remember numbers, but certainly more than a dozen families lived in various rooms there. . . . We stayed in the building where they lived. We had quite a large bright room and there was a bathroom up there. And eventually we moved into the downstairs--there was almost a separate little apartment downstairs still in the main building and we stayed there. . . . The conditions were really very bad as far as the economy. There was pretty much nothing available. We had coupons and we had maybe a half a pound of sugar a month or less, and hardly any meat at all. We would line up for bread and that sort of thing and always with coupons.[56]

When Zergenyi joined his family in May 1945 he left behind more than material possessions, he left his extended family, his home, and his way of life. His parents had planned to come with him, but his father became ill and the elder

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[55]Notes, 17 May 1990, 2.

[56]Doolittle, tape, 1 April 1992.

Zergenyis decided to remain in Sopron. While a few of the family's more valuable possessions were taken to Austria, most of them were lost, stolen, or sold for food and other basics during the years they were living as refugees in Austria. One box, which had been sent ahead, contained Zergenyi's collection of hunting and nature books, but unfortunately it never made it to Austria. The loss of his treasured books was painful enough in itself, but adding to his despair was the fact that he had hidden five hundred American dollars in one of the volumes. In an effort to communicate to me the gravity of this loss he has repeatedly asked me if I have any idea what five hundred American dollars was worth at that time.

Zergenyi did, however, manage to smuggle a few of his special hunting guns into Austria, but they were quickly confiscated, adding to his great despair. Again, Maria recalled:

> One of the first things that happened after he came was that they took away all the guns. The Austrian military came around and collected all guns. Of ecurse his were strictly for hunting and that was always a sad part of his experience, where they took his Purdey guns.[57]

These are just two of the stories of loss that Zergenyi tells when talking about the difficulties he has endured since leaving Hungary.

Paid work was scarce in Altmunster, but Zergenyi's fluency in German and French in addition to his native Hungarian proved to be useful. He recalled, "I was at

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[57]Doolittle, tape, 1 April 1992.

a headquarters where refugees came in. I was an interpreter."[58] He was also employed for awhile by the American army working as a "heater" in the rest center in Gmunden, about five miles from Altmunster. Being a "heater" entailed chopping wood in the nearby forests and maintaining the fires that warmed the center. He also worked as a night watchman, but had to give that up after he became seriously ill with carbon monoxide poisoning resulting from a malfunctioning coal stove in the guard house.

Zergenyi recalls the deep depression he suffered during those years, finding it difficult to adjust both personally and culturally to the changes in his life. Post-war negotiations once again reorganized European national borders and the home he had left in Hungary became part of the former Czechoslovakia. The years following 1945 were painful reminders of his experiences a generation before when his home in Vršac had been annexed to the former Yugoslavia. Looking at a map of present-day Europe he said, "I lost my homeland twice. Most people only lose it once."[59] Zergenyi would never fully recover from losing his home for a second time and he continues to mourn the death of his former way of life.

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[58]Notes, 17 May 1990, 3.

[59]Notes, 16 May 1990, 4.

There were others, like the Zergenyis, who fled Hungary, leaving behind lucrative jobs and comfortable lifestyles.[60] Many of the refugees turned to traditional skills as a way of making even a modest income. One such man was Francis Leicht, an attorney who had been living in Sopron at the time of his departure from Hungary.[61] Leicht, a native of Translyvania, turned to wood carving, decorating the surfaces of wooden boxes with the chip carved designs traditional in this rural region of the country. Zergenyi had the opportunity to observe Leicht at work and for a number of reasons decided to take up wood carving himself. One reason had to do with his state of mind at the time. The upheavals of war and displacement coupled with an imposed idleness left him feeling despondent. For him, working with wood provided a welcome distraction. As he said himself, "this is very good against depression to do something with the hands."[62] Concern for the welfare of his family was also a motivating factor. He felt that wood carving would be a useful skill for him to have given their unpredictable future. A third reason was that wood carvings

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[60]A sizable number of Hungarians displaced by World War II came from the middle and upper classes and represented Hungary's social and political elite. See Steven Bela Vardy, The Hungarian-Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985) 113-122.

[61]Prior to leaving Hungary, Leicht transferred his clients to another Sopron attorney, Paul Zergenyi, who happened to be a cousin of Andrew Zergenyi. Maria Doolittle, letter to the author, March 1990.

[62]Notes, 3 July 1989, 1.

could be exchanged with American soldiers for sweets and money. It "wasn't a greenback," he said, "but you could buy everything in the rest center" with it.[63]

The Zergenyis remained in Austria until 1947 when they emigrated to England. Part of the impetus behind this move was their desire to ultimately emigrate to the United States and they had been told that it would be easier to do so from England. This, however, proved not to be the case and they spent five years in England before they could make the arrangements necessary for U.S. immigration. Zergenyi wanted to move to America because he felt it offered the most opportunities for someone with his training and experiences in agricultural management. With the few skilled jobs going to returning veterans and their circumstances as war refugees, the Zergenyis had little choice but to work as domestics while they waited to enter the United States. Maria, who was then a teenager, was hired as a governess, her mother as a cook, and her father as a butler. According to her daughter, the work was especially hard for Mrs. Zergenyi whose education and experiences in Hungary ill prepared her for domestic service.

One of the difficulties they faced in their attempt to emigrate was the absence of family or friends already living in America who could act as their sponsors. The large number of refugees in similar circumstances only aggravated the problem. One connection Zergenyi did have was a professional one established through his membership in the Royal Hungarian Ornithological Society. Remembering his

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[63]Notes, 17 May 1990, 3.

participation in the 1920s visit to Hungary of former National Audubon Society president T. Gilbert Pearson, the Zergenyis wrote to the Society asking for assistance, but failed to mention the connection with Pearson. The National Audubon Society was sympathetic to their plight, but were unable to offer assistance due to the number of returned servicemen seeking employment. Persisting, he wrote back and this time mentioned his acquaintance with Pearson (who was deceased by this time). The second request for assistance was successful and in 1952 the National Audubon Society gave the Zergenyis an affidavit which allowed them to immigrate to America.

Zergenyi's emotions are mixed when he talks about these unsettled times, but he remembers fondly his arrival in the States. He laughs warmly as he tells of his first morning in America where he and his family were given breakfast free after the waiter learned they had just arrived the night before. "This was very, very nice," he said. He had a similar experience in a restaurant in Ohio where he and Maria had travelled to interview for positions as a farm laborer and governess. He reflected on the kindnesses received, "I was really happy . . . to see the friendly and good people."[64]

The Zergenyis briefly found employment as domestic servants for wealthy families in Connecticut and then in a sanatorium in downstate New York.[65] He recalled the experiences:

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[64]Notes, 17 May 1990, 3.

[65]Milda Danys describes a similar pattern of emigration and employment for Lithuanian DPs in Canada in the late 1940s. See "Luthuanian DPs in Hospitals and Private Homes," Polyphony 8, #1-2 (1986): 51-55.

> There we were working, all three of us. . . . My nerves were very bad and I didn't like that. . . . Then we went to a Hungarian who has a farm near Ithaca. So we went there for a couple of months and we didn't like it there either.[66]

The Zergenyis "decided to go from there" and in November 1953 they moved to Ithaca, home of Cornell University and the affiliated New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences where Zergenyi found employment. "If we to go to America," he said, "my goal always was to come to an agricultural college."[67] He was initially hired to work in the Poultry barns, but soon moved to the Department of Plant Breeding where he was hired as Head Greenhouse man. His former boss, Dr. Royce Murphy, then head of the department, described Zergenyi's responsibilities: "At Cornell he was in charge of and responsible for all routine activities in the research greenhouses for the Department of Plant Breeding."[68] Murphy also commented on Zergenyi's qualifications for the position:

> I told him he was over-qualified for the position but he insisted he wished it if he were selected. It would provide an opportunity for his daughter to get an education which he felt was the most important factor in his remaining career.[69]

In gaining employment at Cornell, Zergenyi, at the age of 53, had successfully achieved one of his objectives in coming to America. Working at Cornell provided

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[66]Notes, 17 May 1990, 5.

[67]Notes, 12 July 1989, 4.

[68]Royce Murphy, letter to the author, 20 September 1990.

[69]Murphy, letter, 20 September 1990.

not only a means to make a living and educate his daughter, but also the opportunity to meet a wide variety of people and to establish social ties. Admittedly a shy man, Zergenyi nonetheless enjoyed the company of the professors and students from the world over with whom he had daily contact at the greenhouses. He recalled, "I had a good job and I was laughing a lot with these boys."[70] Some of his closest friendships were formed with students during these years at Cornell. Ted Bingham, a Cornell alumnus and close friend of Zergenyi's told how they met:

> I saw him and his dog Cookie on the 1st floor of Plant Science Bldg. at Cornell about Jan. 25, 1961. His dog Cookie was an exact clone of the German Shorthaired Pointer that I had left behind a few days earlier when I left home to attend Grad school. Hence, I knew I had to find out more about the dog. I followed him to his workplace in the Greenhouses, introduced myself, started to talk about German pointers, and we've been friends ever since.[71]

He was also friendly with the professors with whom he shared many of the same interests and experiences. One was his boss, Dr. Murphy, whom Zergenyi considered an especially good man because he allowed him to bring his dog to work although it was against university regulations. Another was Dr. William Hamilton, a vertebrate zoologist and veteran of the first world war. The two became acquainted one day when Zergenyi saw a notice advertising a lecture being given by Hamilton on fur-bearing animals. Not able to attend the talk, he went to speak to Hamilton in his office and found they shared many common interests and experiences including both

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[70]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

[71]Ted Bingham, letter to author, Fall 1990.

being veterans of the first World War. "So we were good friends," Zergenyi recalled and added to Hamilton's credit "and he liked to eat woodcock."[72]

Although he very much enjoyed the work he did at the greenhouses and the people he met there, the job was a far cry from his former position in Hungary as estate manager. And while he was grateful for the opportunities life in the United States did provide, he was painfully aware of its limitations and continually reminded of the radical changes in lifestyle he and his family had experienced. For him, America provided a haven, not a home; a place where he was reminded constantly of what he had been forced to leave behind in his beloved Hungary. One story he tells of an encounter with Dr. Murphy speaks to his feelings towards the home he left and the place he resignedly adopted. According to Zergenyi, Dr. Murphy asked him if, in fact, his life wasn't better here in the United States than it had been back in Hungary. He said no, it was not better. Murphy pressed him, saying it must be. Again, he said no, it was not. Persisting, Murphy insisted it must be better in some ways. Zergenyi paused and thought about the ways his life was better and responded that yes it was better. In fact, he said, he could think of three things that were better in the United States than in Hungary.[73] "Much better I told him is the telephone, next ice cream is better. In Hungary we had only ice cream, but it had no milk--sherbet." Skeet

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[72]Notes, 16 July 1991, 2.

[73]Notes, 19 May 1990, 3.

shooting completed his list. He added a fourth item during this rendition of the story I would eventually hear on several occasions:

> And today, almost 40 years I am here, I would say the same. I would add one that is very good and if I am a rich man I would give them money. It is the [National] Geographical magazine. The Geographical Magazine gave me hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of very good hours and I am grateful for that.

He laughs when he tells the story, well aware of the insignificance of the things he selects as being better in the United States. It is a clever and powerful story and one he has told often over the years.[74] Zergenyi plays with his role as immigrant and greenhouse laborer in this story, subtly demonstrating his resistance to be stereotyped as either.

In 1954 the Zergenyis purchased a fifty acre farm on the outskirts of the village of Freeville, about six miles east of Ithaca. There they raised chickens and turkeys through the 1950s and each summer planted flower and vegetable gardens. "We had a lovely garden," he recalled. Zergenyi found some peace in the bucolic setting of his farm where he could go walking or hunting with his dog in the surrounding fields and forests. "As I came home from Corneli, I went into the woods."[75]

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[74]I first heard the story on 23 June 1989 and his daughter Maria has told me that she has heard her father tell it on many occasions.

[75]Notes, 27 July 1989, 1.

Hunting was still Zergenyi's passion, but after moving to America he rarely hunted any large game, concentrating instead on birds, especially the woodcock which could be found in thickets scattered around his property. Living in Freeville he said, "I was interested only in woodcocks. This was a good place for woodcocks."[76] But the hunting Freeville offered could not compare to the hunting he had done in Hungary. "Hunting is worth nothing here," he said. Although this region of upstate New York offered good deer hunting, Zergenyi did not participate in this sport because at the time local regulations mandated the use of shotguns instead of rifles. He felt the shot gun did too much damage to an animal and did not always kill it. Without the accuracy of the rifle and the assuredness of a clean kill, he simply wasn't interested in the sport.

Like in Hungary, he preferred to hunt alone and rarely hunted beyond the boundaries of his own property. But there were special occasions when he allowed others to join him as was the case when his physician, Dr. John Ferger, asked to go along on a hunt. Ferger himself was not a hunter and did not even own a gun, but he was interested in observing Zergenyi and his dog in the woods. He recalled the experience:

> Well he told me about his hunting and I said something to the effect that I'd enjoy going with you sometime. I'm not a hunter. He said, "Well I have an extra gun, I'll give it to you." Well, I really don't know a thing about guns and I don't at this point, but I'd like to see how you and your dog work

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[76]Notes, 16 May 1990, 2.

> together. . . . So, he was very glad to take me along and it was very interesting.[77]

I asked Ferger to describe what it was like to hunt with him and he said:

> [H]e knew just where he wanted to go and he was always talking to the dog and the dog would go sniffing through the woods and he would call back to the dog and tell the dog which way to go and he had very good control over the animal. And, he wouldn't let it get too far away from him. But, he didn't have any words for me. I mean he didn't talk while he hunted. The woodcock would come up in flurry of wings, it would sort of explode as it were, and, he'd shoot if he could. He was a very good shot.[78]

Earlier in our conversation he talked about Zergenyi's ties to both woodcocks and his beloved dogs:

> It's interesting that he had such a close emotional tie to woodcocks because he loved to hunt them. And as I say I went hunting with him two or three times, partly because it was such fun to watch him interact with his dog. And I think the dog was one of the most important things in his life. And his dog was really a person as far as he was concerned. And he had, he or she the dog, had a very honored place in the household and then when they went hunting they acted very beautifully together as a team.[79]

Another friend, Robert Hughes, also spoke of Zergenyi hunting with his dogs, "he loved to watch the dog work--that was the main reason, I think, that he hunted woodcock."[80] The dog was not just an adjunct to the hunt, but a partner enacting a

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[77]John Ferger, personal interview, 27 July 1990.

[78]Ferger, interview, 27 July 1990. William G. Sheldon gives a detailed description of the American and European woodcock in The Book of the American Woodcock (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1967). See also J. W. Scigne and E. C. Keith, Woodcock and Snipe (London: Philip Allan, 1936).

[79]Ferger, interview, 27 July 1990.

[80]Robert Hughes, personal interview, 26 July 1990.

crucial role in the pursuit--typically of game, occasionally of something more abstract. Within the context of the hunt, within the frame of the "Chaseworld," hunters' and hounds' "identities converge."[81]

Hughes was an avid big game hunter who ran a hardware store and gun shop in Freeville and Zergenyi frequently came by the store:

> to look at guns and talk, talk about hunting and whatnot. He was still hunting at that time, had a hunting dog. Loved to hunt woodcock.[82]

Talking with Hughes about their shared interests, I asked about Zergenyi's knowledge of guns: "He knew his guns, all of them, especially the, especially the high grade guns from England and Europe," he said. My question reminded him of a story involving an antique gun and chuckling he said, "this is the thing I remember about him":

> He came into the store one day, he seen I just bought an old 10 gauge double-barrel. Well, at that time I wasn't too interested in older guns, collector guns. I just wanted guns that were functional, be able to hunt with. And I just boughten this gun and didn't realize the value of it I guess, because I probably give the fellow maybe 15 or 20 dollars for a gun just to hang on the wall as a decorator because it had the [mast of sparrows?] on it. And, oh Andy came in and saw that gun and ohhed and ahhed about that gun. He thought that was the greatest thing that ever was. Well, I tried to give to him. And I says, "I've only got $15 dollars in it, take it." "No won't take it, no, no." He wanted to

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[81]Mary Hufford, Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992) 43. Understanding and explicating the relationship between hunters and hounds, partners in creating and inscribing the Chaseworld, is addressed throughout Hufford's book.

[82]Hughes, interview, 26 July 1990. Hughes travelled widely in pursuit of various game and many of his trophies, including an adult polar bear bagged on a hunting trip to Alaska, were on display in his store. Since retirement he keeps his trophies in a game room in the basement of his home.

> buy right th--he wanted to buy it when he first come in and I tried to give it to him and he didn't have the money to buy it and--I guess at the time right in his pocket. So he come back, the next time he come back he says, "Where's that gun?" I says, "It's gone. I sold it." And in the meantime I made up my mind I was gonna give him that gun. It was pret near Christmas time and I thought I'll box it up anu give it to him for Christmas and he can't refuse it then [laughter]. So, I did, I gave it to him and he--oh he come over and oh, you shouldn't do that and you know and went on and on about it. And I says, "Andy it's just an old gun that I bought, didn't pay anything for it." Well, anyway it went on. He says, "I'll leave it to you in my will." Well, that's fine, if he thought that was the thing to do, and, but when he went up just oh about three years ago I guess it was, he took some of his guns, or Maria took them, up to a sale up in Maine. And she took this one along with them. And, they sold it and I didn't know that they had until he called me and he said, he asked me if I'd come over, he wanted to talk to me. And so I went over and he says "Now I don't want you to--what he'd say?--I don't want you to say ANYTHING to me," he says. "I'm going to tell you something and I don't want you to say anything back. Promise me you ain't gonna say anything." I said, "Alright." So he went on to tell me that Maria had taken these guns to sale and she got $1400 for that double-barrel I gave him. And he says, "Now here's $700 we split 50/50." I, I started to say something. "Oh, you promised, you promised," he said [laughter]. So, there weren't nothing to do, but I took the $700 dollars.[83]

For Hughes, this story captures both the nature of his friend and the nature of their friendship, and once again we see displayed the qualities learned in the woods as a child with his father and enacted as an officer on the battlefield with his soldiers. Being a good sportsman, being a good soldier, and being a good friend were important to Zergenyi and he strove for all with the same dedication.

Throughout the 1950s carving continued to provide a therapeutic outlet for Zergenyi as it had all along, although on much more limited basis. Working at Cornell, in addition to raising poultry and hunting whenever he could, left little time

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[83]Hughes, interview, 26 July 1990.

free for carving. After he got rid of the chickens in the late 1950s he had more time to devote to carving. During this period he was carving mostly ducks (fig 17), but he had also begun to make eagles and other species of birds. He also did a few carvings of animals including one of moose and another of a bear.

In 1967 Zergenyi had cataract surgery which, although medically successful, made it difficult for him to hunt as it affected his ability to sight his target. The surgery coupled with retirement from Cornell in 1968 left him with abundant time on his hands. "Everyday I was working for years," he said. "What should I do?"[84] Once again he turned to carving as a way to fill his days and could easily spend a whole day immersed in the production of a particular piece.

While he could no longer hunt, he was actively engaged in teaching others the skills of shooting he had learned from his father and from years of experience. He was particularly interested in teaching his grandsons, Andy and Tom, how to shoot. During summer visits to their grandparents' home, they would spend many a day shooting trap in the fields behind the house. His grandson Tom recalled:

> [O]ne summer one of his friends appeared with a .410--the smallest gauge shotgun. We were to start shooting with it. Andy and I were so excited! We split a box of 25 shells twelve shots each, and whoever hit more got the twenty-fifth shell. The first time I think we each hit one or two. With time we got better, and could do fairly well on the trap ranges at shooting clubs--fifteen or twenty out of twenty-five. On a couple of occasions, he even brought out his antique guns and let us shoot these. . . . When we joined the Boy Scouts, it was vitally important to him that we get the shooting merit badge. . . . And

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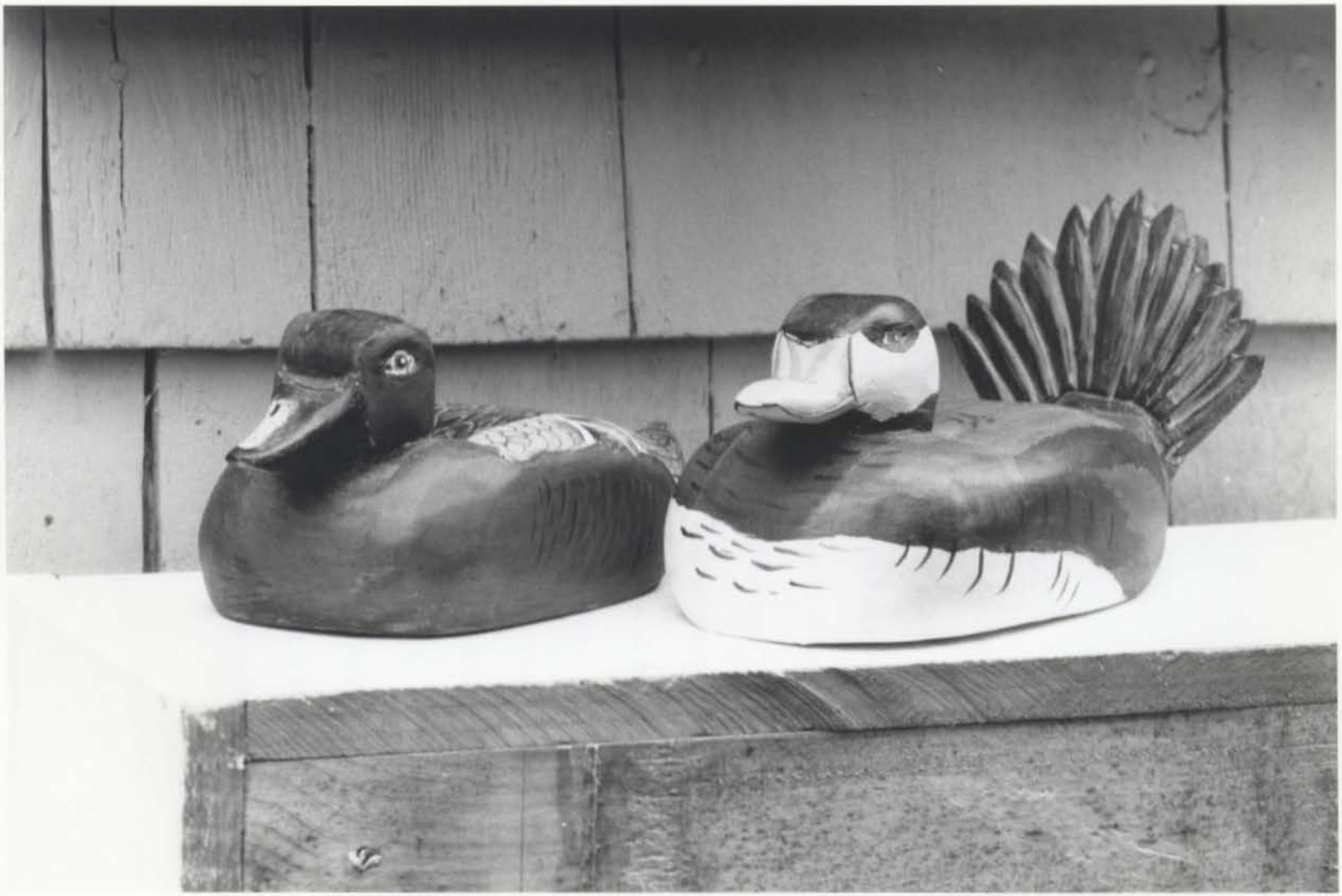
[84]Notes, 21 June 1989, 1.

Figure 17. Cinnamon teal and ruddy duck, some of Zergenyi's earlier carvings.



> once we passed the shooting merit badge, the next summer a recurve bow appeared so we could practice for the archery merit badge![85]

Tom's recollection of this experience as the "most special thing" he did with his grandfather echoes the comments made by Zergenyi when he reminisced about time spent with his father.

Working at Cornell, living on the farm in Freeville, hunting woodcock with his dog in the woods around his home, and developing friendships with people sharing his interests in the outdoors facilitated Zergenyi's adjustment to the changes in his life. But it was never a complete adjustment and to this day he considers himself a displaced person. "You have a Ph.D." he said to me one day. "I have a D.P."[86] Although he laughed as he spoke, there was sadness in his voice. He talked of his homesickness and how his wife put away various mementos of home--mostly photographs--because they were too painful reminders of what he had left behind.

It was equally, if not more, difficult for Mrs. Zergenyi to adjust to the changes they had experienced. The only paid work she could get was in unskilled occupations like domestic service. "I could transfer myself, but she couldn't," said Zergenyi of his wife. Unlike her husband, however, Mrs. Zergenyi became a citizen of her adopted country. For her, citizenship guaranteed her right to remain in America, regardless of what might happen, and she particularly felt the need to protect herself against the

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[85]Tom Doolittle, letter to the author, 13 August 1991.

[86]Notes, 19 May 1990, 1.

potential for further upheaval. He also encouraged his daughter to become a citizen, in part he said, so she could travel freely.

Zergenyi, on the other hand, although he described the United States as his "refuge," decided not to become a citizen. When I asked him why he simply said, "I didn't want to travel." Instead, he maintained his Hungarian citizenship, annually completing the paperwork necessary to continue residing in America. Again, I asked him why and he explained, "because I am a Hungarian, but I am not a citizen of the communist Hungary." He paused for a moment and then continued, "So I have no citizenship at all really."[87] In essence then, Zergenyi remains emotionally tied to a place (and a time) to which he cannot return, because it no longer exists. Maintaining his status as a displaced person for almost half a century was a way of preserving these tenuous links to his former life, the life which forms the basis of his identity and the foundation of his very existence. Completing the forms necessary to maintain his status as a resident alien was perhaps a way of reaffirming to himself and to others who and what he was. He may live in the United States, but he belonged to Hungary and remaining a displaced person sustained, and perhaps even nurtured, that crucial division.

Zergenyi's feelings toward his adopted country on the whole may best be described as ambivalent, an attitude not uncommon among immigrants who have been

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[87]All of the above quotes are from Notes, 19 May 1990, 1.

forced to leave their homes.[88] He recalled that an acquaintance, the English Duke of Bedford, said he wouldn't like it in America and he reasoned it was because the Duke "was thinking on the hunting."[89] Hunting aside, perhaps the greatest source of Zergenyi's ambivalence is his deep and abiding resentment of American intervention in World War II balanced by his feelings of gratitude for the opportunities immigration to the States offered him and his family. He recently observed, "Nobody can live so good as a d.p. as in America."[90] He does, however, have very strong opinions about the politics of the American government. "I was very mad because the Americans came there fighting," he said in reference to US involvement in Europe during the Second World War. However, he maintains that:

> The Americans are very good, very good people. . . . I have only very good experience with them. . . . Only the leaders are not good. They make everything complicated.[91]

His own sense of Hungarian nationalism and his experiences while living in Europe may have sensitized him to the political and cultural chauvinism he has witnessed in the United States. It is not uncommon to hear him say that Americans are only

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[88]Many of the immigrants profiled in Myerhoff's Number Our Days express a similar ambivalence toward their adopted homes.

[89]Notes, 17 July 1991, p. 2. Before the war, Zergenyi had corresponded with the Duke of Bedford, himself a dedicated hunter with a large deer park, on the subject of antlers. The two met when the Zergenyis immigrated to England.

[90]Notes, 19 July 1991, 2.

[91]Notes, 19 May 1990, 3.

interested in American things and have little curiosity for the world outside their borders, except perhaps for exploitive purposes. To be fair, he argues that all countries are chauvinistic to some degree and being a strong nationalist himself, he was not totally adverse to such sentiments. But his own experiences compel him to point out that too narrow an outlook can also disadvantage a nation and its people. It is a topic which deeply moves him and one he addresses not only in conversation, but also less directly, but no less significantly, through his carving--a point I will return to in a later chapter.

The early 1980s were very difficult years for Zergenyi. In November of 1980, Clara, his wife of fifty years, became ill and died quite suddenly. Naturally, Zergenyi was quite shaken by his loss. Gordon Hollern, a close friend of his, talked of Zergenyi's despair at the time, but also of his recovery from it:

> Well, it was extremely difficult for him, you know. We were actually very close and it was a very difficult time for him and I would stop and check on him and just you know listen to him, talk to him. Then of course he lost her and then he, not long after that, he lost his German short hair--which I guess Missy--that he'd, he had for probably fifteen years and was, you know, of course very fond of his dog, so that was another pretty tough blow on him, but. He was, obviously pretty low for awhile, but he did alright, took some time, but he, he's strong.[92]

One of the ways he overcame his depression was through the acquisition of another dog, Troy, who became a loyal companion. He continued to carve, although with less dedication than before, and also turned to music as a way to fill his days.

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[92]Gordon Hollern, personal interview, 27 July 1991.

He kept a small, electric keyboard by the chair where he always sat and would play by ear various classical pieces and selections from Italian operas he recalled hearing his mother perform when he was a child. We talked one day about the changes one experiences after retirement, including filling long days once spent working. "You get crazy if you have nothing to do, he said."[93] With his keyboard in hand he added, "This is not so good. It makes noise, bothers people. A man in England shot his wife, she was playing so much."[94] The glint in his eyes belies the seriousness of his voice, leaving me wondering if he is telling the truth. It is his wry sense of humor as much as anything which has helped him confront and survive the challenges he has faced.

Late in 1989 at the age of ninety, Zergenyi's health took a turn for the worse. Among his other ailments was a fractured elbow sustained by a fall on the ice while getting his mail. Unable to care for himself, he temporarily moved to Bar Harbor, Maine where he could be cared for by his daughter and her husband, Don. His recovery was slow and he spent most of the winter months bedridden, but by the spring his health had greatly improved. Although he was feeling better and relatively able to manage on his own, he decided to remain with Maria and Don in Bar Harbor. The decision has been a good one for him. At 94, he is doing well and remains ever inquisitive about the world around him (fig 18). Nonetheless, he complains of the

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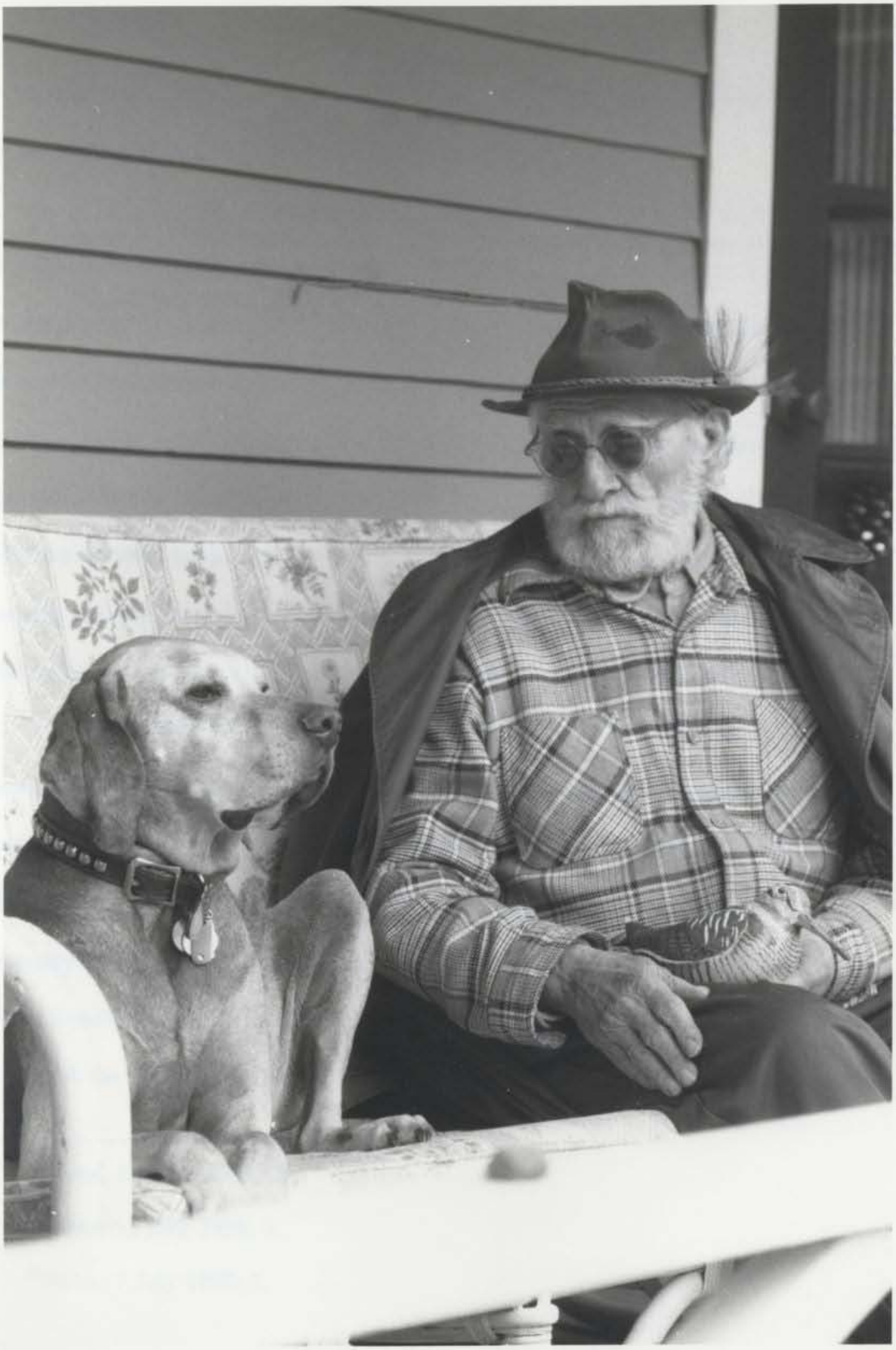
[93]Notes, 27 July 1989, 1.

[94]Notes, 27 June 198, 1.

Figure 18. Zergenyi and his dog Troy on the front porch of his home in Bar Harbor, ME, May 1990.



vicissitudes of aging as might be expected of someone who led as vigorous and active a life as he has:

> This is very bad, very bad for me. This makes me sick to sit, sit, sit, doing nothing. It is awful for me to go out the step like a crab. I was always a good sportsman. Now I am a cripple.[95]

Although he voices anger and frustration about the limitations of aging, he is not completely victimized by it. In the summer of 1990 he purchased a ten inch bandsaw which he used to produce several new carvings and more recently he has acquired a wood burning kit, inspired to do so by magazine articles he has seen on the detailed, life like carvings being made today. While the saw and carving tools sat idle during another bout of illness in the fall of 1992 and perhaps will remain as such, the spark, the curiosity, and the spirit that so characterize Zergenyi are all still active.

One afternoon in 1989 as we sat in the warm sun on the side porch of his home in Freeville I asked him if he had one day to do anything he desired, health considerations aside, what would he do. Without hesitation he said, "I would hunt."[96] More recently, during a visit to Bar Harbor we talked about the hunting he did in Hungary and I asked if he would like to hunt again. This time he answered he would not and sadly said, "I am sorry for this. The animals are suffering in the winter. . . . I feed now the squirrels outside."[97] Each morning he spreads bird seed on the picnic

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[95]Notes, 18 May 1990, 2.

[96]Notes, 12 July 1989, 2.

[97]Notes, 7 July 1992, 5.

table situated on the lawn below his window. In addition, bird feeders filled with suet and seed hang from nearby trees.

As we talked, I sat on the bed next to Troy whose slumbering body occupied the center area. Old age and crippling arthritis make it difficult for the dog to do anything else. Zergenyi sat in his rocking chair, his strong hands folded and resting in his lap. His room is cluttered with books, magazines, woodworking tools, a television, stereo, and exercise equipment. On the wall above and behind the rocking chair are three shelves about three feet in length. On each sit several of the ducks he has carved over the years. There are other carvings scattered throughout the room, resting on table tops, bookshelves, and tucked inside cupboards. The woodcock sits on his dresser close by his bedside (fig 19). As I looked around the room I was struck again as I had been before by how much it had come to resemble his home in Freeville: dark and cluttered. He had made the space his own. Zergenyi paused for a moment after answering my question on hunting and then asked me to see if the squirrels were eating on the picnic table. I went to the window and reported that one was. From his seat on the other side of the room he told me to look in the feeder hanging from a branch above the table and there I would find another one. He was right.

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Figure 19. The European woodcock carving sits on the dresser by Zergenyi's bedside, Bar Harbor, ME, May 1990.

Writing a biography is like taking a photograph of someone's life. Writing creates an ethnographic portrait, photography a celluloid one and both are real, but only partially because they can never completely capture the full complexity of their subject. The biography like the photograph is framed, two-dimensional, and frozen in time. Life, however, is unlike either. It is fluid, three-dimensional, and without clear edges, and thus the portrait, whatever its format, can only ever be a partial rendition of its subject. All attempts at capturing a life are finally "illusory productions" which can only ever give "the impression of realism."[98]

Ethnographic writing is also selective and exclusive, and its ultimate shape reflects not only the nature and character of the subject, but how that subject was viewed and investigated by the researcher. As Bruce Jackson commented, "We deal with objects in terms of our sense of the boundaries of objects."[99] How and what one decides is story-worthy out of the mass of recorded details and observations is as interesting, and as important to know, as the story itself. Folklorists and others engaged in ethnographic research have begun to discuss these very questions as recent critiques of ethnography demonstrate.[100] The presumed objectivity of earlier

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[98]Karen Lux, "The Making of 'God's Mother is the Morning Star:' A Case Study in Videotaping an Elderly Folk Artist," New York Folklore 15 (1990): 33.

[99]Bruce Jackson, "Things That From a Long Way Off Look Like Flies," Journal of American Folklore 98 (1985): 132.

[100]While much has been written on this subject from a number of disciplinary perspectives, the collections of essays by Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, The Anthropology of Experience (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1986) and James Clifford

ethnographic accounts, achieved in part through the careful editing out of the ethnographer's voice (and philosophical stance), has been replaced by an acknowledgement of their subjectivity. As Miriam Camitta asserts:

> all research is subjectively influenced by factors such as gender and that certain styles of conducting research are valorized as objective when in fact they are merely privileged.[101]

In Number Our Days, Barbara Myerhoff grappled with the implications of inserting her own voice into the account, recognizing that to do so challenged the objective style of anthropological writing believed to be fundamental in the discipline. Ultimately, she felt she had no choice but to include herself in the work as,

> it became clear that what was being written was from my eyes, with my personality, biases, history, and sensibility, and it seemed dishonest to exclude that, thereby giving an impression of greater objectivity and authority than I believed in.[102]

The polemic has gone so far as to describe ethnographic accounts as inventions, "partial truths" at best, drawing attention to their "constructed, artificial nature."[103]

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and George M. Marcus, Writing Culture (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986) have been especially important. Barbara Myerhoff's wonderful and compelling account, Number Our Days, which tackled many of these issues more than a decade before, has profoundly shaped my ideas and feelings on the subject.

[101]Miriam Camitta, "Gender and Method in Folklore Fieldwork," Southern Folklore 47 (1990): 22.

[102]Myerhoff 30.

[103]James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," 2, 6-7 in Clifford and Marcus. See also the essays by James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," 98-121 and Paul Rabinow, "Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology," 234-261 also in Clifford and Marcus.

One folklorist described the ethnographic document she produced as "an artifice that symbolizes rather than replicates its subject."[104] Asserting that ethnographies are constructions recognizes that they are made--but not made up--by an ethnographer working within certain theoretical and methodological paradigms and also within particular social, cultural, and historical contexts. As Edward Bruner contends, "No ethnography is truly innocent--we all begin with a narrative in our heads which structures our initial observations in the field."[105] And likewise Vincent Crapanzano notes, "The ethnographer conventionally acknowledges the provisional nature of his interpretations, [but] does not recognize the provisional nature of his presentations."[106]

One objective of this reflexive pursuit, then, is to heighten the ethnographer's awareness of his or her own biases in not only the interpretation of data, but also in its collection and presentation. "It is about acknowledging who we are as we do ethnography and where we are as we write up these ethnographies," claims Elaine Lawless.[107] Ethnographies, like other written accounts both factual and fictional in the

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[104]Lux 33.

[105]Edward M. Bruner, "Ethnography as Narrative," in Turner and Bruner, 146. In "Things That From a Long Way Off Look Like Flies," Jackson contends that theoretical models are only one of the multiple lenses through which we view our work, 131.

[106]Vincent Crapanzano, "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description," in Clifford and Marcus, 51.

[107]Elaine Lawless, "'I was afraid someone like you . . . an outsider . . . would misunderstand': Negotiating Interpretive Differences Between Ethnographers and Subjects," Journal of American Folklore 105 (1992): 302.

conventional sense of the terms, "are guided by an implicit narrative structure, by a story we tell about the peoples we study."[108]

It is the manipulation of all the disparate elements of fieldwork--tape recordings, transcriptions, notes, observations, and experiences--into a coherent and logical narrative that makes the ethnographic document a construction, a fiction, a partial representation.[109] The nature of its construction, however, does not invalidate the ethnographic account, nor diminish its potential contribution to our understanding of the people we study. Perhaps these fictions are all we as ethnographers can realistically hope to accomplish given the acknowledged limitations of the ethnographic pursuit.

In her "Unpublished Letter From Tromso," Bente Alver tackles this issue of objectivity and accuracy in ethnographic presentations as she attempts to communicate her experiences interviewing folk healers in this northern Norwegian community. She likens the notion of objectivity to other intangible beliefs writing, "Belief in objectivity

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[108]Bruner 139.

[109]Jeff Todd Titon takes up the issue of the fictional nature of personal accounts in "The Life Story" Journal of American Folklore 93 (1980): 276-292. He distinguishes life story from life history or biography by claiming that a story is made up, while history is discovered. According to Titon's typology, this account of Zergenyi is a life history, but I would argue that it came about not only through discovery, but also to some degree through creative construction. Elliott Oring addresses the issue of biography as construction in "Generating Lives: The Construction of an Autobiography," Journal of Folklore Research 24 (1987): 241-262.

is like belief in angels -- it is found in those who have a use for it."[110] Upon rereading her ethnographic account of her experiences she writes:

> I must admit that it wasn't like that at all. This doesn't mean that I have told you anything that didn't happen. I haven't been trying to mislead you. But how can we translate other people's realities?[111]

It is a rhetorical question, but one we must nonetheless try to answer as we grapple with the challenges of writing ethnographies.

Translating other people's realities is at the heart of the ethnographic enterprise and to say that this account of woodcarver Andrew Zergenyi is a constructed narrative is not to say that it doesn't strive for realism. Furthermore, neither is it an attempt to explain the account away in some postmodern rhetoric where one is never sure of truth; instead it is quite simply to acknowledge authorship, to claim that this story about him is my story, not his. I say this not by way of apology, but rather to clarify whose voice you primarily hear as you read this account. Although "ethnographies are coauthored,"[112] in the end they are rarely true collaborations, because to be such both ethnographer and informant would have an equal say in the final product and typically they do not. Informants are given a voice,[113] allowed as many researchers state, "to

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[110]Bente Alver, Creating the Source Through Folkloristic Fieldwork (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1990) 81.

[111]Alver 84.

[112]Bruner 148.

[113]Oring posits that life histories more than give an informant a voice, indeed they "attempt to create *voice*" (emphasis original), a voice that is as commanding and

speak for themselves in their own words," but we shouldn't forget that their responses are occasioned by our questions, and the portions of speech selected are controlled by our editing.[114]

While the biography of Zergenyi presented above is coauthored to the extent that it relies heavily on many long conversations with him over several years, as well as ones with his family, friends, and acquaintances, it is nonetheless my version of his life and is colored by my notions of what is significant to the story I tell over the course of this work. At the same time, it has been shaped by the informants' memories and, importantly, Zergenyi's willingness to discuss in any detail certain events in his past.[115] Another, more personal factor must also be acknowledged and that is my awareness of the expectations both Zergenyi and his family have of this document. I do not imagine my portrait of Zergenyi will duplicate theirs, nor do I

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authoritative as the collector's, 259-260.

[114]Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses how "life histories engage in a rhetoric of authorship" as they accommodate both the voice of the informant and the researcher in "Authoring Lives," Journal of Folklore Research 26 (1989): 131. For examples of life histories presented in the informant's own words see Rosemary O. Joyce, A Bearer of Tradition (Athens and London: U of Georgia P, 1989); Martin J. Lovelace, "The Life History of a Dorset Folk Healer" (M.A. thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1975); and Diane Tye, "A Contextual Study of a Newfoundland Folk Artist: Patrick J. Murphy, Bell Island" (M.A. thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1981).

[115]Others working in the area of life history have noted the reluctance or outright refusal of their informants to discuss certain aspects of their lives. See, for example, Rosemary O. Joyce, A Woman's Place (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1983) 3-38; Joyce, A Bearer of Tradition 26); and Lovelace 43.

expect them to embrace my interpretations. I understand they are seeking history, not analysis. But as I write, I cannot help but wonder if they will approve and my wondering has made me extremely attentive to the implications of what I say.

The following chapter on research and fieldwork methodology takes a broader perspective on the issues that influence not only the writing of biography, but also the writing of ethnography in general. The process of negotiation that occurs between informant and researcher in ethnographic encounters is discussed in detail as it is particularly pertinent to the shape and content of this account. Ethnography is an evolving process and though we may enter the field with a particular narrative in mind, as Bruner contends, that story undergoes revision as we learn more and more about our subject and our relationship to it.

CHAPTER THREE

NEGOTIATING FIELDWORK GOALS AND INFORMANT EXPECTATIONS

At first blush fieldwork may seem like a relatively straightforward enterprise in which one selects a topic of interest and then goes out in search of informants who are especially gifted or knowledgeable participants in the area chosen. Even a brief foray into that great expanse we so casually call "the field," however, makes one realize what an ambiguous process fieldwork really is. There is no single recipe for good field research and success is often as much the result of serendipity as it is of careful planning and preparation.[1]

Guidebooks like those written by Kenneth Goldstein and Edward Ives,[2] which offer useful information on formulating research strategies, selecting knowledgeable informants, asking questions, and properly documenting the whole encounter, are valuable companions for the fieldworker, but their characteristically objective, how-to

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[1]Edward D. Ives mentions the serendipitous nature of documentary research in "Common-Man Biography: Some Notes by the Way," in Folklore Today: A Festschrift for Richard M. Dorson, eds. Linda Dégh, Henry Glassie and Felix Oinas (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1976) 254-255.

[2]Kenneth S. Goldstein, A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, 1964) and Edward D. Ives, The Tape-Recorded Interview (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1980).

approach glosses over the more intuitive aspects of the ethnographic process. In her discussion of fieldwork, Bente Alver underscores the importance of empathy in doing ethnographic research[3] as does Henry Glassie who describes ethnography as "the ability to converse intimately" with our informants.[4]

More recent fieldwork guides like People Studying People and Fieldwork take up some of these issues.[5] People Studying People is not a fieldwork manual in the sense of providing guidelines on how to conduct research, but instead is an introspective look at the "personal relations between researchers and their subjects."[6] The book's basic premise "is that an understanding of fieldwork is dependent upon an appreciation for the fundamental human nature of the pursuit."[7] The authors contend, and the ethnographic literature bears this out, that until recently anyway few written accounts of fieldwork include any detailed description of the nature of these personal

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[3]Bente Alver, Creating the Source Through Folkloristic Fieldwork (Helsinki Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1990).

[4]Henry Glassie, Passing the Time in Ballymenone, Publications of the American Folklore Society, n.s. 4 (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982) 14.

[5]Robert A. Georges and Michael O. Jones, People Studying People (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1980); Bruce Jackson, Fieldwork (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1987).

[6]Georges and Jones, 3. Many of the fieldwork stories included in this book are drawn from accounts written by anthropologists and sociologists who have lived for extended periods with cultures quite distinct from their own. While many of the problems encountered in these situations are also confronted in the fieldwork typically carried out by folklorists, the nature and structure of folkloristic fieldwork does differ.

[7]Georges and Jones 3.

relationships. While the majority of fieldwork manuals discuss the need to develop rapport with informants, few indicate that rapport is continuously negotiated throughout the experience.[8] Robert Georges and Michael Jones explore the acknowledged but typically undisclosed negotiations, clarifications, compromises, and reflections that arise in the course of conducting fieldwork--processes that have a significant impact on the shape and content of the ethnographic account --whatever form it takes.

This chapter explores the intimate nature of ethnography and takes up some of the personal issues involved in working with an individual, particularly the negotiations and compromises that occur between collector and informant. Bruner refers to this process as "the ethnographic dialogue," which he describes as "the complex interactions and exchanges that lead to the negotiation of the text."[9] Negotiations of the type I discuss here characterize all fieldwork encounters to lesser or greater degrees and inevitably influence the final shape of the ethnographic account. It is important, even necessary, to describe the often circuitous route that research takes, including both the successes and the setbacks, not only because it more accurately represents the way information is gathered, but also because it reveals much about the attitudes and expectations of both the collector and the informant as they negotiate their way through the fieldwork process. Fieldwork descriptions that

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[8]Georges and Jones 63-64.

[9]Edward M. Bruner, "Ethnography as Narrative," in Turner and Bruner 147.

incorporate this information provide a more accurate lens through which the interpretive and analytical portions of the ethnographic account may be critically viewed.

Written accounts of fieldwork are neat and clean, edited and expurgated versions of the field experience, and are thus only part of the story. The biography of Zergenyi presented in the previous chapter is such an account. The seams connecting the disparate pieces into a wholecloth are invisible to the reader, not to perpetrate any falsity, but rather to serve the purpose of the document which is a particular telling of his life history. The objective here is to examine those very connections that were glossed over in the last chapter, to describe the means through which the information was gathered, and to account for details which may be lacking or non-existent.

It was almost three years to the day since I first met Andrew Zergenyi in July 1986 and we were again sitting in his living room sheltered from yet another hot and humid upstate New York summer afternoon. I had spent the last month or so working closely with him discussing, photographing, and packing off to the county museum various pieces from his collection of bird carvings in preparation for their upcoming exhibition. We had discussed on several occasions whether he would see the final installation of the exhibit and each time he thought it unlikely, saying driving into Ithaca made him nervous and that he wasn't comfortable in crowds. Given the active role he had taken in selecting the carvings and the personal stake he had in the project

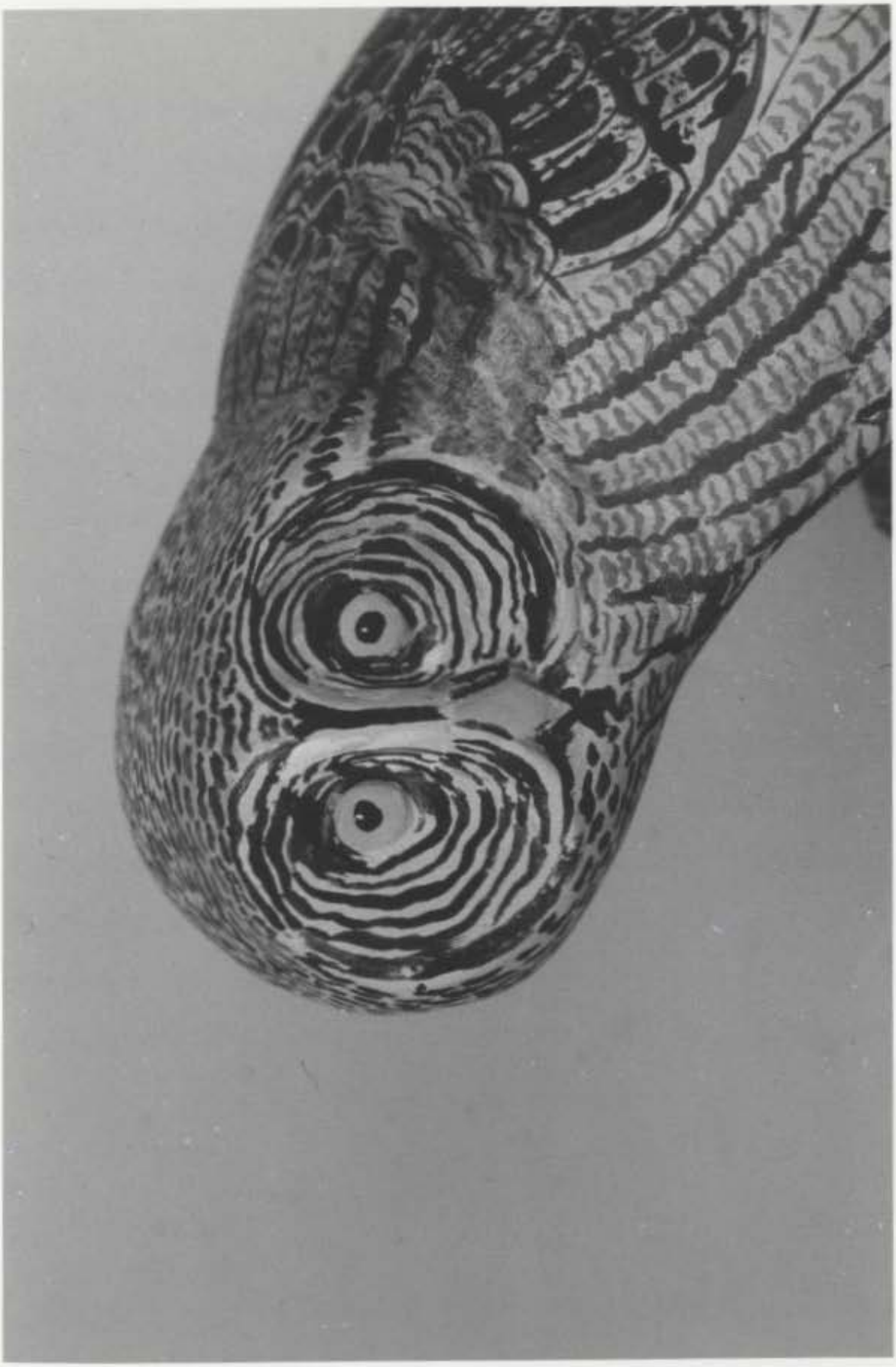
as a whole, I was both saddened and dismayed by this prospect. I mentioned the situation to my colleague Carl Koski, who was assisting in the photographic documentation of the carvings and installation of the exhibit, and together we came up with a solution. If Zergenyi couldn't come to the exhibit, we would bring it to him, or at least a workable version of it. Toward that goal, we decided on a slide show featuring photographs of carvings taken by both Carl and myself over the course of the summer's research.

Zergenyi's living room was transformed into a theater as we set up the projector and screen. The projector fan hummed noisily in the background as I put the carousel in place and set it in motion. Image after image of bird carving filled the screen, all familiar and yet, in this context, made exotic through their enlargement in projection. Some of the slides had been taken inside his home, others on the warped and weathered boards of the side porch and he nodded affirmatively as he viewed each of them. Other slides had been taken by Carl in the studio where he had experimented with various backgrounds (a white sheet and black velvet cloth) seeking to find one that would best accentuate the rich colors and textures of the carvings (fig 20). To these Zergenyi responded with a mixture of surprise and pleasure, and he effusively complimented Carl's photographic skills. In addition, I had taken some shots of specific details on the carvings such as the layering of paint to create feather patterns (fig 21) and the piercing eyes found on many of the carvings (fig 22) and the sight of these images engendered a similar reaction of wonder and delight.

Figure 20. Flamingos and their young. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 21. Red-breasted merganser showing detailed painting.

Figure 22. The steady gaze of a barred owl.



The show lasted for less than a half hour and when it was over Zergenyi warmly thanked both of us for our interest and our efforts. Although he had painstakingly created each of the pieces shown, seeing them projected on the screen provided him with a novel perspective and I sensed a feeling of pride in his accomplishments as a wood carver--as an artist--that had been noticeably absent earlier in our discussions of his work. Furthermore, viewing the results of all the hours we had spent documenting and photographing the collection gave him a greater awareness of the research process as a whole--one that he sometimes found frustrating and disconcerting--a point that I will return to later in the chapter.

As we dismantled the makeshift theater and put away the equipment both Carl and I felt gratified at Zergenyi's elated reaction to the slides. Zergenyi was equally pleased and said repeatedly throughout the show and again at its culmination, "I am a very happy man. You have made me a very happy man."[10] This was quite a change in attitude from when we first began the research a month earlier when he frequently made reference to his declining health (he was almost 90 at the time) and his difficult past. His positive reaction represented one more small breakthrough in the negotiations and compromises that had very early on become a fixture of this research project.

I was working as a public sector folklorist at a county historical society in upstate New York when I met Zergenyi in 1986. At the time, Jean Warholic, an acquaintance of Zergenyi's and a colleague of mine at the museum, had told me about

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[10]Notes, 25 July 1989, 1.

his collection of carvings and repeatedly suggested I pay him a visit. The opportunity to do so arose in conjunction with research I was doing on local folk artists for an upcoming exhibition. The exhibit was to feature four traditional artists from the area who were actively engaged in the creative process and would be willing to demonstrate their skills in addition to displaying examples of their work. At the time I met Zergenyi he was no longer carving, nor was he interested in conducting workshops or demonstrations at the museum and as a result, he could not be considered for the exhibit as planned. His collection of over seven hundred carvings, the majority of which remained in his possession, however, was impressive enough to warrant its own exhibit. I suggested to the museum's director that serious consideration be given to organizing an exhibit focusing exclusively on this collection and in 1989 the New York State Council on the Arts provided major funding for this project. I was contracted to research and guest curate the exhibit which ran from November 1989 to August 1990 at the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County in Ithaca, NY.

My initial involvement in this research as a public sector folklorist critically informed my approach to the project.[11] While ethnographic research often entails a

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[11]Situating my initial research in the public sector is not an attempt to perpetuate the dichotomy between the academic and applied aspects of the discipline addressed by Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett in "Mistaken Dichotomies," Journal of American Folklore 101 (1988): 140-155. For a good general overview of public sector folklore see Burt Feintuch, ed., The Conservation of Culture: Folklorists and the Public Sector (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1988). The essays included in the section "Programming Formats and Issues" is particularly pertinent to the issues raised here.

process of negotiation between collectors and informants, each with their own objectives and expectations, here I also had to take into consideration a third party, namely the historical society, whose vision of the exhibit departed measurably from both mine and Zergenyi's. Finding a way through these often opposing conceptions of the project presented several problems the solving of which ultimately resulted in much richer data than I initially anticipated.

One of the challenges encountered in working with Zergenyi and his collection of carvings was our conflicting expectations about the nature and intent of the research. Given the rhetoric of the discipline and my training and experiences as a folklorist, I naively expected to encounter an informant who would respond favorably to my interest in him as an artist. I anticipated someone eager to talk about himself and his work, and the relationship between the two. All too often we assume, perhaps misguidedly, that people are willing, even anxious, to discuss their life and work with us simply because we express an interest in them. Zergenyi, on the other hand, conceived of my role as researcher very differently. He expected someone who would approach the carvings not in artistic terms, but in scientific ones. Someone who would recognize the educational value of the collection and appreciate the carvings as aids for teaching students about ornithology. Least of all did he expect someone asking him to talk at any length about himself as the creator of this collection. For

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See as well Karen Lux, Folk Arts Programming in New York State: A Handbook and Resource Guide (Syracuse, NY: Regional Council of Historic Agencies, 1990), which features several case studies of public sector projects.

Zergenyi, the purpose of the collection was to provide knowledge about birds, not about himself. For me, the purpose of studying the collection was to provide information about the maker and his work; anything I might learn about birds was of secondary importance. I will go on to discuss the role of these conflicting expectations and others in shaping the research.

Our first interview since that initial meeting in 1986 was scheduled for June 21, 1989. I had spoken to his daughter Maria the day before and she informed me that her father was busy cleaning and repairing the carvings in preparation for their display. She also alerted me to her father's expectations about the exhibit: it was to be about the birds and not about him, and that he was hoping that the exhibit would attract buyers for the collection, which he was hoping to sell to a museum or school.

I arrived at his house as scheduled and after we renewed our acquaintance, Zergenyi led me up the narrow, steeply-pitched stairs to one of the rooms where the collection was kept. Although I had witnessed this scene before, I was once again taken aback by the hundreds of brightly colored carved birds clustered tightly on tiers of wooden shelves, their wooden bases fitted together like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle (fig 23). Overhead a flock of Canada geese were suspended from the ceiling by thin gray wire held in place by thumbtacks (see fig 2). Everywhere I looked my eyes were met by the silent, penetrating stares of hawks, eagles, owls, ducks, and other birds peering down from their perches (fig 24). Overwhelmed by the sheer number of carvings and not exactly sure where to begin, I haphazardly pointed to one carving and

Figure 23. Carvings clustered on makeshift shelves lining the walls of an upstairs bedroom in Zergenyi's home in Freeville, NY.

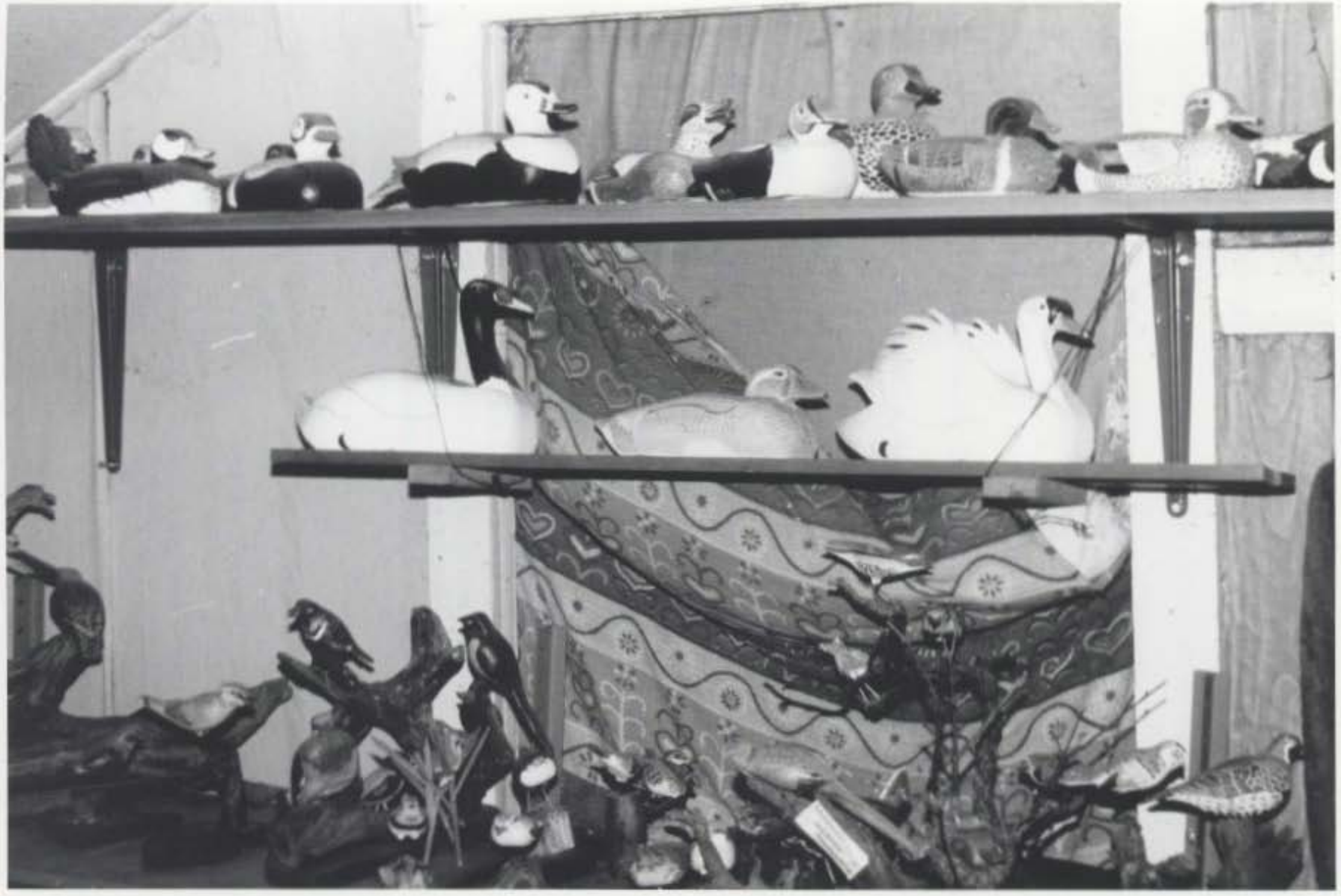
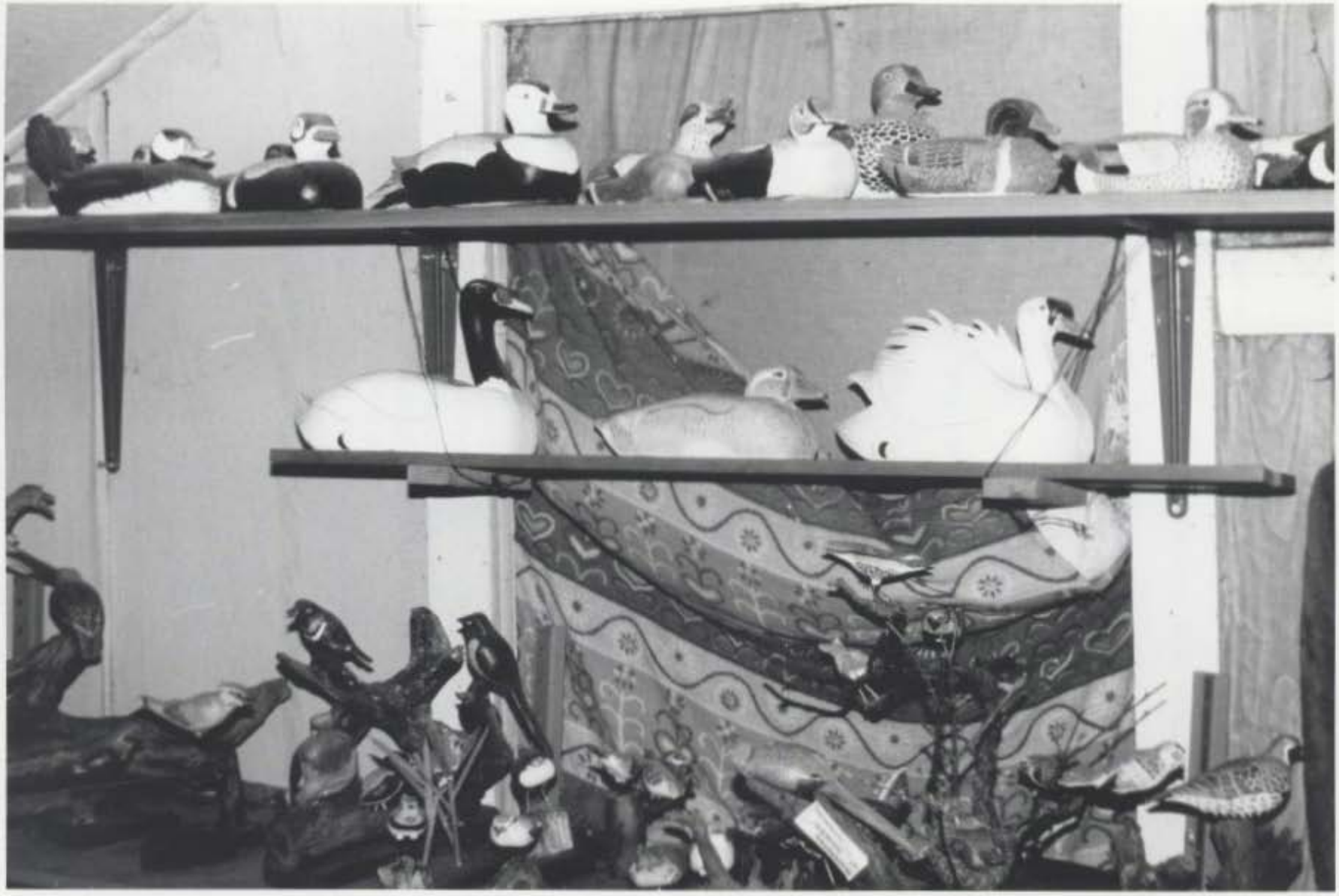


Figure 24. Ducks and geese sitting on shelves tucked under the eaves in Zergenyi's home in Freeville, NY.



then another, asking general questions about each one. Zergenyi answered my questions patiently and recognizing I knew very little about birds, he used this opportunity to give me an introductory lesson in ornithology. "Every bird has its own story," he said and he proceeded to tell some of them.[12] He told of the hornbill where the female and nesting young take cover in a hollow tree as a form of protection against predators (fig 25). He described a similar interdependence with the male and female huia, an extinct species from New Zealand (fig 26). "If the short beak (the male) finds something in a tree trunk or something he wants to eat, he calls the female (the long beak) to get it out." Continuing, he pointed out the "bearded vulture is so smart. Because he can't break the turtle shell, he drops them on the rocks."[13]

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[12]Seeing objects as embodiments of stories or as touchstones for narratives is common with both makers and consumers. In Craftsman of the Cumberlands, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series, (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1989), Michael Owen Jones writes, "Every chair had a story about it," 49. A recent exhibit of New England folk art was organized around "the idea that the narrative impulse is pervasive in folk art." See Janet G. Silver, ed., Stories to Tell (Lincoln, MA: DeCordova and Dana Museum and Park, 1988) 7. Jane Beck's essay in Silver, "Stories to Tell: The Narrative Impulse in Contemporary New England Folk Art," 38-55, expands on this theme. Varick Chittenden links folk art and narrative in "'These Aren't Just My Scenes': Shared Memories in a Vietnam Veteran's Art," Journal of American Folklore 102 (1989): 419-421. Susan Stewart discusses the narrative potential of acquired objects in On Longing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984) 132-166 as does Åsa Ljungstöm in "Artefacts--Keys to the Past," Arv 45 (1989): 52-71. Whole expressive forms, like the story cloth, literally give shape to narrative. See for example Sally Peterson, "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth," Journal of American Folklore 101 (1988): 6-22 and Barbara A. Babcock, "'We're all in there, in the clay': Stories, Potteries, Identities," The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research 12-17 June 1984, eds. Reimund Kvideland and Torunn Selberg (Bergen: n.p., 1984) 29-48.

[13]Notes, 21 June 1989, 2.

Figure 25. Hornbill. The nesting parent sticks its bill out through a hole in the tree to receive food for the nestlings.

Figure 26. Huias. The male has the short beak and the female the long one. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Listening to Zergenyi tell these stories encouraged me seek a larger narrative that included something about himself as the maker of the carvings. As folklorists we are taught to seek this kind of contextual information in order to place the material in a meaningful interpretive framework. What I didn't understand at the time, but which would become patently clear over the course of the research was that while we were both using narrative to frame the material, we were using it in very different ways and toward very different ends. The stories he was telling and would continue to tell were rooted in nature and served a didactic purpose--to educate me or any other listener about the interesting habits of birds. By contrast, the story I was seeking to construct was located in culture and personality. My purpose was interpretation and analysis. Mediating this crucial difference in orientation to the material and the research formed the heart of our negotiations.

In asking for details on his personal life I was not completely ignoring Zergenyi's insistence that the exhibit focus on the birds; instead I was attempting, in part, to determine the limits of this restriction. Was it his intention to be completely absent from the presentation or was it that he simply did not want to be its central focus? Discovering his perceptions and expectations of his role in the project was central to formulating a research strategy, especially if that meant organizing a folklore exhibit where the artist declined to be featured. Furthermore, the narrative frame which Zergenyi himself used to describe the birds seemed to lead naturally to questions about his own story. So, I cautiously proceeded to ask him about his

motivations for creating such an impressive collection of carvings. But what I perceived to be a natural flow in the interview was perceived very differently by him. In response to the more personal inquiries, Zergenyi became agitated, frankly disgusted, and with a gesture of dismissal said accusingly that I was not really interested in the BIRDS, that I was only interested in HIM, and that HE was not very interested in THAT, concluding my chastisement with a final pronouncement, "Oh, you make me sick."[14]

Although I anticipated some resistance to my personal probing, I was unprepared for the harshness of this response. I knew he was quite enthusiastic about the research--in principle at least--and I knew he was pleased to be exhibiting the collection. Furthermore, he had discussed his personal life in our first encounter several years earlier. His response did, however, clarify his perception of the research as far as discussing more personal material. I was dismayed by his reaction, but I was also dismayed by the fact that we would have to return to this issue again if I was going to be able to successfully mount anything resembling a folkloristic exhibit of a traditional artist and his work. I apologized for upsetting him, reassured him of my interest in the carvings, and began to explain why I was also interested in him as their maker. I decided to let the issue drop for the day and our conversation returned to safer ground.

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[14]Notes, 21 June 1989.

Within hours of commencing the research, we had reached an impasse based, in part, on very different ideas and expectations about the nature of the research. While both of us were committed to organizing an exhibition of his carvings, my conception of that exhibit differed greatly from his. From my perspective as a folklorist, pursuing a line of questioning which moved from the object to the maker's thoughts and motivations made sense. From Zergenyi's point of view my questions were not only intrusive, but, more importantly, they were irrelevant. In his conception of the project, the kind of personal information I was seeking was of little significance. It's not that he intended to be difficult or uncooperative, in fact his intentions were quite the contrary. Rather, it was evident that he had a very clear sense of what information he thought was appropriate and necessary to mount the exhibit as he perceived it. From his perspective, the carvings were what was interesting, not the details of his personal life and as he understood it, the point of the exhibit was the display of his collection--all six hundred or so pieces--and not the display of him.[15] He conceptualized the exhibit based on an art museum model where the objects would be placed on display with little interpretative text.[16] As such, my

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[15]Cf. Almeda Riddle's questioning of Roger Abrahams' interest in her "when the songs were so much more important," in Roger Abrahams, ed., A Singer and Her Songs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1970) 148.

[16]Zergenyi had previously displayed a selection of carvings in just such a manner at Cornell University's Ornithology Lab. What is interesting is that Zergenyi was well aware of the importance of context as he himself placed his carvings in naturalistic settings.

role essentially was to facilitate the transfer of the carvings from his home to the museum.

In response to the events of the first day. I returned to Zergenyi's two days later daunted but determined to make a case for the kind of research I not only was interested in doing, but also felt was necessary to conduct. I presented him with photographs of previous exhibits and catalogues from folk art exhibitions in order to give him a sense of the kinds of information folklorists included in these displays: pictures of the folk artist at work and of the contexts in he worked, quotes from the maker describing process and meaning, examples of the tools and materials used in making the objects, and of course, examples of the work itself. I nervously sat on the edge of the chair while he perused the material and considered my earnest attempts to explain what is that we do as folklorists. I talked about meaning, function, context, and the value of presenting the larger picture, that telling the story behind the carvings was worthwhile and made the carvings more interesting. And as I reflect back on this encounter, I recall the strength of my conviction that my attempt to change the way he conceived of the project was the right and proper thing to do. Although I respected his position, I also felt that if he were more informed about the nature of folklore and the expectations of the audiences viewing folkloristic exhibits that he might make some concessions.

He reviewed the material, listened to my explanations, and with a slightly vexed laugh turned to me and said I could do whatever I wanted. As before, I was

unprepared for a response seemingly giving me free reign. But I was to learn as the research proceeded that what appeared initially to be a radical change of heart wasn't the case at all, because in reality little changed. I was still in a situation of having an informant who perceived himself to be extremely cooperative (and who was for the most part), but who resisted being drawn into a discussion on what was behind these carvings. What had changed, however, was the understanding that now existed between us. Both of us had a much clearer sense of what each of us expected out of the research. Furthermore, the tensions that arose on the first day were successfully resolved, thus strengthening our working relationship. And finally, although I didn't realize it at the time, we had established a pattern for dealing with the conflicts which inevitably arise in the course of fieldwork.

A second problem arose in dealing with the museum displaying the collection. They approached the project from a curatorial perspective and raised issues of insurance, maintenance, and security--all valid concerns. Discussion of these issues by museum staff culminated in their decision to mount a display featuring approximately twenty-five of the carvings. I knew Zergenyi would find this arrangement unacceptable and I broached the issue with him very carefully, hinting at some vague, but relatively small number of carvings which could be selected for the exhibit. He reacted with the same strength and conviction as he had to my personal probing. If the museum could only accommodate a small sampling of the collection, he was not interested in displaying it. He was unequivocal on the matter, he simply would not

participate in the project. Furthermore, he felt betrayed by the director of the museum with whom he had discussed the exhibit when it was in the planning stages and firmly stated that he would never have agreed to a project featuring so few carvings. And we so reached another compromise. We would not include all seven hundred pieces, but would in concert select ten or fifteen representative carvings from each of the seven geographical regions: seventy-five to one hundred pieces in all. Zergenyi seemed satisfied and I decided not to immediately inform the museum staff of this change in plans, a decision allowed in part by my dual role as researcher and exhibit curator. This compromise proved to be crucial by not only providing a way for the project to continue, but also by providing a means of obtaining the desired contextual information.

I continued to visit Zergenyi two or three times a week during which we would talk about the various carvings as we got them prepared for the exhibition. The basis on which I selected pieces for discussion was fairly haphazard. I simply picked ones whose coloring, form, or setting caught my eye and gave little regard to species or region. Zergenyi quickly grew impatient with my unsystematic approach and insisted that we work through the collection region by region. He explained that the carvings were organized by region and produced a spiral bound notebook in which he had carefully recorded each piece by both its common name and Latin name (fig 27). The list was divided into seven geographic regions and also included a section on extinct species of which there were several representatives in the collection.

Figure 27. Page from Zergenyi's record book. The book is divided into sections according to geographic region. Each carving is listed by its common name and Latin name. Item number 27 on the list, Xantus' murelett (sic), was named for a cousin of Zergenyi's who identified this species.

1. CANADA GOOSE. SM.
2. RUFOUS HAMMIN BIRD / SELASPHOR S RUFUS /
3. RUBITHROATED H.B. / ARCHILOCUS COLUBRIS /
4. 5. BOB WHITE QUAIL / COLINUS VIRGIANUS /
6. GREAT HORNED OWL / BUBO VIRGINIANUS /
7 AM. WOODCOCK / PHILOHELA MINOR /
8 HOODED MERGANSER / LOPHODITES CUCULLATUS /
9 RED BREASTED MERGANSER / MERGUS SERRATOR /
10 COMMON MERGANSER / MERGUS MERGANSER /
11 RED PHALOROPE / PHALOROPUS FULICARIUS /
12 NORTHERN PHALOROPE / PHALORUPUS LOBATUS /
13 WILSON PHALOROPE / STEGANOPUS TRICOLOR /
14, 15, 16 CAROLINA PEROQUET / CONUROPSIS CAROLINENSIS /
17. WOOPING CRANE / GRUS AMERICANA /
18. WOOD STORK / MICTERIA AMERICANA
19. AMERICAN BROWN PELICAN. / PELECANUS OCCIDENTALIS /
20 AMERICAN BITTERN / BOTAURUS LENTIGINOSUS /
21. YELLOW CROWNED NIGHT HERON / NYCTANASSA VIOLACEA /
22. LEAST BITTERN / IXOBRYCHUS EXILIS /
23. COMMON EGRET / CASMERODIUS ALBA /
24 BLACK CROWNED NIGHT HERON / NYCTICORAX NYCTICORAX /
25. COMMON TER / STERNA HIRUNDO /
26. GOLDEN PLOWER / PLUVIALIS DOMINICA /
27 XANTUS MURELET. / ENDONICHURA HYPOLICA /
28. BARN SWALLOW / HIRUNDO RUSTICA /
29. WILLET / CATOPROPHORUS SEMIPALMATUS /
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Some of the regions were better represented than others in terms of the number of carvings. There were, for example, over two hundred examples of North American birds, over one hundred and fifty for South America, and just less than fifty for Africa. I saw the notebook as an opportunity to get Zergenyi more involved in the research by asking him to make the initial selection of carvings that he felt best represented each region. Before each visit Zergenyi would select twenty or thirty carvings from a particular geographic region and together we would select the ten or fifteen carvings to be included in the exhibit (fig 28). Although he was sometimes frustrated in the selection process by what he felt was a lack of direction on my part, I countered that his choices would be informed by the very ornithological principles which guided the creation of the carvings in the first place, rather than the whimsical aesthetic standards I was using. Selecting pieces based on their superficial qualities would not result in a very representative sample of the collection I argued. As he himself said, "Every bird is interesting in some way, for me anyway. Not for everybody, but for me."[17]

Participating in the selection process and handling pieces he had not considered in years, prompted him to narrate not only their stories, but also led to stories about himself: recollections of hunting with his father, of his game room at home in Hungary, of the war and the losses he suffered, and of the difficulties he faced in

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[17]Notes, 28 June 1989, 3.

Figure 28. Carvings set on the bed in preparation for selection. Photograper: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

adjusting to a new life in a foreign country.[18] The carvings became the springboard for discussions. Through the birds he talked about things which he found interesting and which gave him pleasure, as well as things which brought him sadness. Holding a carving of a honeyguide he observed it was:

> not very colorfu', but interesting. . . . [It is] chirping and hopping and guiding man to the bees. Man gets honey and bird gets the grubs. So, both are satisfied, the man and the honeyguide.[19]

The discussion of the red crossbill began with an explanation of how it uses its specially designed beak to husk pine cone seeds and then moved on to what a nice pet this bird made. Zergenyi himself had one while living in Austria and had even successfully smuggled it into England by hiding the cage under a large overcoat draped across his arm. But the bird was subsequently killed, adding to the sense of loss that pervaded his life. Ironically he said, "It is believed that if you have a sickness, then the bird will take it away from you."[20] And then there is the very special carving of a European woodcock which he keeps by his bedside and refused to loan for the exhibit. When I asked him why, he explained that it was a bird he hunted a lot when he lived in Hungary and that it reminded him of his home.

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[18]Charles Briggs reports a similar experience in his research with the woodcarvers from Cordova, New Mexico. Repeated attempts to solicit information on local carvers and the carving process through interviews were unsuccessful. "The problem only resolved itself," he writes, "when I began carving with the couple." In Learning How to Ask (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 1986) 44.

[19]Notes, 12 July 1989, 1.

[20]Notes, 27 July 1989, 1.

When discussing more sensitive topics such as his flight from Hungary and his current status as a displaced person, I tried to follow his lead, to talk about those issues when he brought them up, rather than probing through direct questioning. As we grew to know and trust one another, Zergenyi became more responsive, talking more openly about personal subjects and taking a more active role in the research. He showed me his sketchbooks filled with hundreds of pencil drawings of birds and agreed to let me include in the exhibit several older photographs of him which hung on the walls in his living room. Up to this point, he had steadfastly refused to allow the inclusion of any photographs, old or new. He would not, however, grant me permission to take any photographs of him, nor did he ever allow me to use a tape recorder during fieldwork. Instead, I recorded the interviews by hand, writing down key words and phrases, and when the pace of conversation allowed for it, longer portions of quoted speech. In addition, it was not uncommon early on in the research for him to insist that I stop taking notes, saying it made him nervous to have me writing down everything he was saying. I did protest arguing the value of presenting the material in his own words, but he countered that I was young and had a good memory and didn't need to write everything down. With a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, I put down my pencil and put away my notebook. Without the typical accoutrements of documentation, I was forced to pay especially close attention to our conversations and made a special effort to remember how they unfolded and

developed. It was sometimes a frustrating process and an often tiring one, but at least he was still talking and giving me the opportunity to listen.

My visits with Zergenyi usually ended around one in the afternoon in order to give me time to walk to the end of the road where I caught the bus back to town. Once clear of the driveway, I would take out my notebook and hurriedly scribble notes--snippets of quoted speech, a passing comment, key words and phrases--which I would expound on during the half hour bus ride into Ithaca. As soon as possible after the interview, I made a typewritten record based on these notes and described in detail the work completed, the information gleaned, and my feelings about the research process such that my field notes became, as perhaps they are supposed to, a personal diary of the fieldwork experience. While I would have preferred the luxury (and that's how I came to view it) of the tape recorder, the notes would have to suffice and I very quickly developed strategies to aid in remembering our encounters. I also became much more conscientious in describing contextual details such as whether we talked in the living room or on the back porch, the daily temperature, and anything else that might aid in jogging my memory when I returned to the notes at a later date.

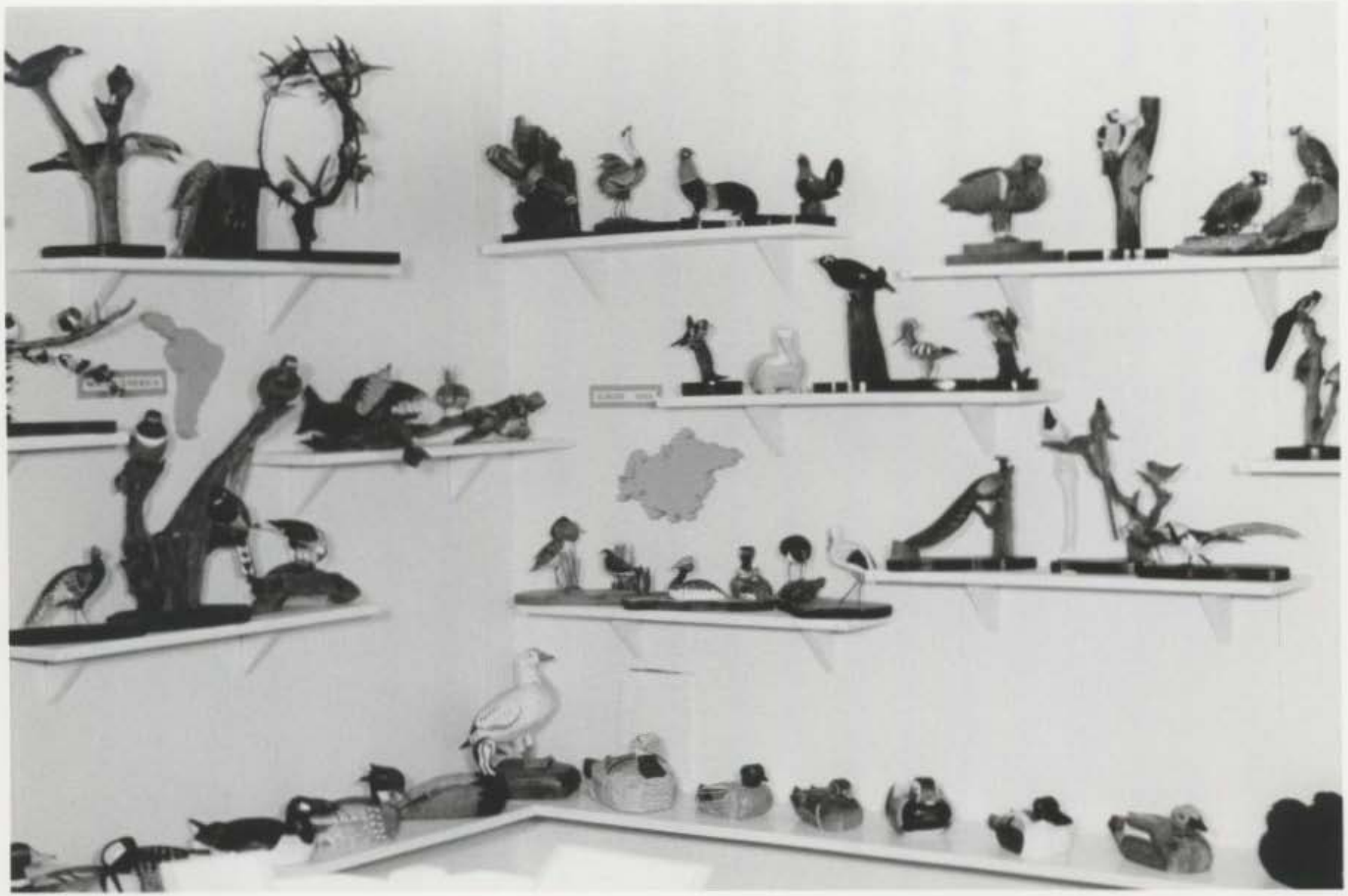
No photographs, no tape recordings, and little personal information were the limitations Zergenyi initially imposed on the project, but they were not the only constraints. There was also the problem of the number of carvings the museum had stipulated for the exhibit which would eventually have to be dealt with. But most troublesome was the limited time in which to complete the research, write the exhibit

script as well as the text for an accompanying brochure, design the exhibit, and organize the graphics and objects to be used in the display. I was also working on publicity and complementary education programs. I list these tasks here only because having to complete them meant that I was forced to concentrate on gathering information directed toward the production and completion of the exhibit in the limited time allotted. As a result some data were glossed over for expediency's sake. It was only later when I decided to write a thesis on the subject that I was able to set my own priorities and work according to my own deadlines. Nonetheless, I have increasingly come to realize the terrible loss of not being able to record all the details of Zergenyi's life tossed out in casual conversations during that first summer's research.

The exhibit, "Every Bird Has Its Own Story: The Carvings of Andrew Zergenyi," has gone up and come down, and it included somewhere between 125 and 150 birds in all. In the end, Zergenyi allowed much more of himself to be included than he had initially said he would including several photographs of him hunting in Hungary and a more recent one of him carving, a chronology of his life, examples of sketchbooks and the notebook where he kept a record of the carvings made, tools, and examples of carvings other than birds. We came to the point in the research where we joked that the exhibit was really two exhibits in one: the first half talked about his personal history and the production of the carvings (fig 29); the second half featured most of the bird carvings displayed by region (fig 30). I was the curator for the first

Figure 29. Installation shot from the exhibit "Every Bird Has Its Own Story: The Carvings of Andrew Zergenyi" featuring the section on "Process." Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 30. Installation shot from the exhibit "Every Bird Has Its Own Story: The Carvings of Andrew Zergenyi" featuring the section displaying the carvings by geographical region. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.



exhibit, Zergenyi for the second. This arrangement simultaneously provided a means for me to mount an exhibit that featured contextual and interpretive text, and for Zergenyi to realize his goal of placing a large number of his carvings on display.

As predicted, he did not have an opportunity to see the exhibit in person, although in the end it was due to ill health. Once again, I brought it to him. The following spring, seated comfortably in the living room of his home in Bar Harbor, he viewed the installation shots of the exhibit. I was feeling quite ambivalent throughout the screening. On the one hand, I was really excited about showing him the exhibit that we had both worked so hard to bring to fruition. On the other hand, I was apprehensive about his viewing the sections in which he as the maker figured so large. Slide by slide we toured the exhibit beginning with the title panel and ending with the concluding section which was illustrated with a color photograph featuring his carvings of European and American woodcocks. He grumbled a bit at the beginning, I think it was as much a teasing reminder of the compromises we had made as it was an expression of disapproval. In the end, he expressed approval of the exhibit as a whole, but of course was most pleased with the section where the majority of the carvings were displayed by geographical region. It was a victory for both of us.

It was during the installation of the exhibit that I asked how he would feel about my writing my doctoral thesis on him and his collection of carvings. I had previously broached the idea with Maria, who encouraged me to ask but did not falsely raise my hopes that her father, being the private man he was, would agree to

the scrutinizing that comes with thesis research. Much to our mutual surprise, he not only agreed, but also said he would even consider allowing me to tape record our conversations--a request he ultimately denied.

After the exhibit was installed in November 1989, I did not see Zergenyi again until the following May. A trip planned in March had to be postponed due his health which had been very poor over the winter months. Although we spoke on the telephone fairly regularly, it was not a medium conducive to conducting fieldwork, especially given Zergenyi's poor hearing. During one conversation Maria kindly offered her assistance with the research and I gratefully accepted it. We decided that I would send questions to Maria who would then essentially interview her father and record (in writing) his answers. She would then send me his responses. In turn, I would send another set of questions, some original, others as a follow-up to or clarification of previous ones. I recognize the potential problems in what essentially amounts to third-party data gathering, but see the information as differing little from that gathered in archives, for example, and I have treated it accordingly. Quotations from the questions composed by me, but asked by Maria are so designated in the text or in a footnote. In addition, I have made an effort to corroborate much of the material gathered in this manner in subsequent interviews I have done with Zergenyi myself. This system has proved to be successful and it is one I have continued to rely on throughout the research to clarify points and to supplement gaps in the data.

Although he still refuses to allow me to use a tape recorder when we talk, these days he rarely insists that I stop taking notes and even tries to accommodate me by speaking slowly enough for me to record quoted speech. In an attempt to circumvent some of the problems faced when the research was in its early stages, I tell Zergenyi in advance the topics I wish to discuss which then gives him some time to mull them over and to organize his thoughts. Likewise, I continue to use the tactic of asking him to peruse a book on a related subject and use that as a springboard for the next day's work. Both approaches have been successful in eliciting comments and generating discussion on a number of topics. For example, using direct questions I repeatedly tried to determine--without much success, I might add--Zergenyi's exposure to traditional carvings during his life in Hungary. Taking the alternative approach, I showed him a book on Romanian woodcarving and asked him if any of the pieces featured looked familiar to him. Not only were some of the carvings familiar, but he also pointed out ones he and his parents had in their own possession.

Informing Zergenyi ahead of time of the topics I wished to discuss had other advantages: it allowed him time to go back to particular moments in his past (one spanning over ninety years), reduced the surprise factor, and gave him some measure of control over the course of the research. Relevance is still an issue for him and he resists answering questions when he does not see their pertinence to the research. And his need for relevance compels me to articulate the connections between the questions I ask and the information I have already gathered, thus making me justify my queries.

In order to facilitate documentation of our conversations, I have taken to preparing a list of questions in advance of my visit. This saves me the trouble of having to write down my questions in addition to his responses as well as giving me a better sense of the flow of conversation. Having this topical itinerary of sorts also frees me to pay more attention to the connections between items in the discussion and thus the way in which subjects are linked by Zergenyi as we talk.

He is far less reserved than he once was and is more willing to discuss some of those difficult personal issues that he avoided in the beginning. He has also given me access to some of his personal papers and has allowed me to reproduce several old photographs taken while he still lived in Hungary. There is still some reluctance on his part, however, and I have to be careful not to push him too hard or he gets annoyed. And he still avoids some of my questions.[21] Perhaps it is because the questions I ask do not make any sense to him[22] and his silence is a form of polite indulgence, or perhaps there are still things he feels are better left untouched. We have come across subjects where our widely differing viewpoints have caused tension between us and I have decided not to pursue these topics any further. In doing so, I truly believe the research, and ultimately this ethnographic account, is not

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[21]Rosemary Joyce encountered a similar situation in her work with Sarah Penfield. See A Woman's Place (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1983) 24-25.

[22]Briggs addresses this problem throughout Learning How to Ask. See especially chapter one where he comments on the methodological assumptions about the interview as a way of gathering information and chapter three on "communicative blunders" where he discusses these issues in terms of his own fieldwork.

compromised--it's a judgement call to be sure, but much of ethnographic work is, whether we admit it or not. I have made a conscious choice not to probe areas that engender more pain than I feel the information is worth. It is just too difficult for both of us and the small gains do not justify the large costs.

In the close working relationships that characterize ethnographic fieldwork, becoming friends with informants is natural, although not necessarily inevitable. Friendship brings an intimacy and balance to the relationship and with it an altered dynamic that has both its challenges as well as its rewards. Questions about the validity of this relationship--of any relationship that narrows the distance between researcher and informant claimed to be necessary for the work to be considered rigorous in its interpretations--have been raised in the past. Miriam Camitta challenges those who privilege fieldwork relationships characterized by distance, contending that the "friendship frame" is both valid and authentic in large part because it "offers the possibility for reciprocity and for collaboration and for affiliation rather than alienation"--precisely the goals of contemporary ethnographic research.[23]

Although, as the author of this story, I have retained control over its final shape and content, Zergenyi has collaborated in its construction by telling me what he thinks is important to the research. As we work through my questions, he takes the opportunity to emphasize the points he thinks I must include in the thesis, the

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[23]Miriam Camitta, "Gender and Method in Folklore Fieldwork," Southern Folklore 47 (1990): 25.

information I must convey to my readers in order that they may understand the choices he has made and the work he has produced. He punctuates what is important with the phrase "this you must tell them" and in doing so he exercises some control over my story of his life and work. Some of his requests have been more strident than others, but none have been so poignant as his insistence that his dog Troy be included. The two of them have grown old together and are inseparable companions. In the spring of 1990, when, after much cajoling, Zergenyi agreed to be photographed, he insisted that Troy be included as well (see fig 18).

Becoming friends with our informants introduces a level of intimacy and trust into the relationship that is often absent when the roles of collector and informant are more clearly defined. As friends, interviews give way to conversations, gathering information to sharing news, and brief visits to extended stays.[24] Over a period of time you may become, as I feel that I have, a kind of honorary family member and are treated accordingly. Within that relaxed context, an informant is more likely to reveal and discuss more personal and sensitive issues than he may have felt comfortable doing when the social distance was greater.[25] In situations of enhanced familiarity an informant is also likely to be less guarded and more willing to let the collector see

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[24]See also Camitta 26.

[25]Michael Ann Williams' research on the use and function of space in folk houses is a good example of folklore research utilizing a similar approach. See "'Come on Inside': The Role of Gender in Folk Architectural Fieldwork," Southern Folklore 47 (1990): 45-50.

him in both good and bad lights, that is as the complex, multi-faceted human being he really is. On the one hand, this kind of intimacy provides the researcher with much richer data and gives her the opportunity to paint a much fuller portrait of the individual than more directed and limited contact necessarily could. On the other hand, it raises certain ethical problems when it comes to presenting the data. When we interact with our informants as both researchers and friends we must consider when one role ends and the other begins. When are we acting as researchers and when are we interacting as friends? Does every conversation, every interaction, every moment spent together count as grist for our ethnographic mill? And if it does, have we made that clear to our informants and their families? I, along with many other researchers, struggle with the dilemma of how to simultaneously present and protect our informants, of how to paint a portrait of them that is a true likeness with all the positive and negative qualities without betraying the confidences learned in the context of friendship. In these situations ethnographers often face difficult choices and decisions regarding their responsibilities to scholarship and their responsibilities to their informants. Rosemary Joyce commented on her struggle to be "true to my friend and simultaneously true to myself as an academic" in her account of the life history of an Ohio grandmother.[26]

Another example of this struggle is Glassie's contentious portrait of Dorrance Weir which deeply affected both the informant and the collector, and ultimately

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[26]Joyce 21; Georges and Jones 148-152; Alver.

jeopardized their relationship.[27] Years later Glassie reflected on that experience and wrote that he had conformed to academic norms of presenting data, but in the process "offended the man I wrote about and lost me a friend. Friends are worth more than books. . . ."[28] Chastened by the confrontation, Glassie turned his attention to artifacts which he "could question aggressively, push, rip, criticize" without fear of the repercussions.[29] But the artifacts brought him back to people and he was forced to come to terms with his desire to write both analytically and compassionately. He resolved "to create an ethnography strong enough to cause disquiet in my world, but gentle enough to cause no discomfort among the people I wrote about."[30] The result of his efforts, Passing the Time in Ballymenone, might be criticized for going too far in the other direction, of painting a portrait of people that is too idealized, too romanticized. Whether those criticisms are justified is up to the reader to judge, what is important here is Glassie's struggle, of ethnography's struggle for that matter, to put flesh on the bones and feeling in the hearts of the people we write about and to do so in a way that furthers scholarship without sacrificing friendship.

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[27]Henry Glassie, "Take That Night Train to Selma: An Excursion to the Outskirts of Scholarship," Folksongs and Their Makers, eds. Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives, and John F. Szwed (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1970) 1-68.

[28]Glassie, Ballymenone 11.

[29]Glassie, Ballymenone 11.

[30]Glassie, Ballymenone 13.

Barbara Myerhoff discusses this problem in Number Our Days, a reflexive study of a Jewish senior citizens center in Venice, California.[31] Myerhoff developed very close relationships with members of this community and when it came time to present her findings she too was forced to reckon with the emotional conflicts between her position as a professional anthropologist and her role as a personal friend. She wrote of this dilemma:

> I wanted my people to be loved and admired as a result of my study, for in addition to being survivors, they were presently poor and maltreated. I wanted to protect them, even from my responses. But I finally accepted the necessity for sacrificing that desire. . . . My work would have to be a full-length portrait, light and darkness with more shading than sharp lines. Since neutrality was impossible and idealization undesirable, I settled on striving for balance. If these people emerged as real in their entire human range and variety, arousing admiration and disappointment, laughter and tears, hope and despair, I would be satisfied.[32]

Myerhoff is successful in achieving the balance she strives for with her compassionate and beautifully wrought portrayal of this elderly, Jewish community.

In her book on Ohio basket maker Dwight Stump, Rosemary Joyce takes another tack.[33] She presents her informant as a hardy, "hard working man," who although advanced in years was still active and strong. It is only at the end of the book that she tells her reader the Stump they have come to know in the previous

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[31]Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

[32]Myerhoff 28.

[33]Rosemary O. Joyce, A Bearer of Tradition (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1989).

pages is the man she first met in the 1970s and not the man she knows today on whom age and infirmities have taken their toll. Joyce defends her decision to organize the book accordingly saying she wanted readers to meet Stump as she did when he was in his prime, not when he was incapacitated by health problems as he had only recently become.

While the relationship Michael Owen Jones had with Appalachian chairmaker Chester Cornett may or may not be accurately described as a friendship, it was nonetheless one characterized by a high degree of familiarity. Over the years Jones had seen and learned a lot about Cornett's life with its many hardships, difficulties, and depressions. As readers of both The Handmade Object and the revised version Craftsman of the Cumberlands we are spared few of the details, or so it seems. Certainly these personal struggles were pertinent to understanding Cornett's chairmaking, especially the now famous two-in-one bookcase rocker, but I have always felt slightly uncomfortable and somewhat voyeuristic reading Jones's presentation of Cornett's personal and familial problems. Jones desired, as all biographers do, to paint a full portrait of Cornett, though I feel his portrayals do not achieve the balance so evident in Myerhoff s depiction of her informants.

Both Jones and Myerhoff have greatly influenced my thinking on the subject of how we, as ethnographers in the privileged position of authorial control, present our informants. Ultimately, I have come to understand it is unnecessary to know (and how presumptuous to think that would even be possible) and then tell everything about

Zergenyi in order to gain and communicate a reasonable understanding of who he is as a person and as an artist. Gaston Bachelard eloquently addressed the futility of thinking one could ever completely know the experiences of another.

> "What would be the use, for instance, in giving the plan of the room that was really *my* room, in describing the little room at the *end* of the garret, in saying that from the window, across the indentations of the roofs, one could see the hill. I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still retains for me alone that unique odor, the odor of raisins drying on a wicker tray. The odor of raisins! It is an odor that is beyond description, one that it takes a lot of imagination to smell."[34]

I have made this decision recognizing it leaves me open for criticism and accusations of bias in the presentation, but as I discussed in the previous chapter, all ethnographic portraits are only ever "partial truths." The argument then becomes one of degrees. In writing this account, I have tried to fairly present Zergenyi as I have come to know him and to do so in a way that is both compassionate and analytical--hoping to strike that most delicate balance.

Balancing the need to protect her informants and the desire to publish her findings has informed much of Bente Alver's work on contemporary belief traditions in Scandinavia. Her book, Creating the Source Through Folkloristic Fieldwork, recounts her twenty years of experience doing fieldwork on such sensitive topics as witchcraft and sorcery, satanism, and folk healing. In the material she publishes, she makes every effort to protect her informants while at the same time giving her readers

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[34]Gaston Bachelard, "The Phenomenology of the Dwelling," Landscape 13 (1964): 30.

a true picture of them and their work as she has understood and interpreted it."[35] Furthermore, Alver asserts that the ethnographic portrait presented in any written account is only one of the many potential versions which a researcher could paint depending on the questions asked and responses given.[36]

Alver conducts fieldwork using what she calls the "qualitative method." It is a highly intensive, inherently subjective and intuitive, non-hierarchical approach to ethnographic research which calls on the researcher to be empathetic towards her informants. It weaves fact-finding together with the analysis of those facts such that "a continuous interpretation of meaning is in progress throughout the whole interview."[37] Glassie called for a similar stance when he entreated scholars to use "imagination to enter between facts, to feel what it is like to be, to think and act as another person."[38] Alver's qualitative method articulates and gives shape to that intuitive side of fieldwork that we have all known and experienced, if not acknowledged outright in our discussions of methodology. It concentrates on other ways of knowing and delves behind and below the surface of statements in attempt to discern all of their potential meanings. Margaret Yocom describes the intuitive side to fieldwork as "the second way of knowing" which she contrasts with the:

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[35]Alver 58-59, 84-85.

[36]Alver 59.

[37]Alver 87.

[38]Glassie, Ballymenone 12.

> prescriptive methods where we fieldworkers plan our activities. . . . This is the world of intention where we turn to manuals . . . to sharpen our skills in observation, interviewing, and recording. Here fieldwork proceeds through a series of acts.[39]

The second way of knowing is harder to define she writes:

> it lies in the world of the unintentional . . . ideas proceed from our interactions with the people we study as we allow ourselves to be open to and often carried along by the unexpected, the surprise, and the mystery.[40]

In the Fall of 1990 during my stay at the University of Bergen's Etno-folkloristisk institutt, I was most fortunate in being able to study the principles of the qualitative method under Alver's tutelage. She taught me to delve into the data and to find in it significant relationships. But most of all she challenged me to question it, not to take the data at face value, and to repeatedly take my questions and interpretations back to Zergenyi to clarify if what I understood him to say is what he meant.[41] On the surface the methods of this approach seem so obvious one wonders why they should be considered in such depth. However simple or straightforward the qualitative method appears and however much sense it makes to engage in it, few folklorists have actually done so. Alver is uncommon in her practice of asking her

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[39]Margaret R. Yocom, "Fieldwork, Gender, and Transformation: The Second Way of Knowing," Southern Folklore 47 (1990): 34.

[40]Yocom 34.

[41]In Learning How to Ask, Briggs asserts that responses to questions posed in an interview context do not always reveal what an informant means to say and in fact, may do just the opposite. Likewise, Camitta contends that "The interview, as a social genre that is controlled by the interviewer, is a form of mastery over object, acquisition of knowledge through control of language," 26.

informants to critique what she has written, to comment on her understandings and interpretations of the events observed. Her work strives for and comes much closer than most to achieving collaborative ethnography.

Although the qualitative method is more useful when working with tape recordings or transcripts of conversations, I nonetheless found it very worthwhile in teasing meaning out of the bits and pieces of information I had collected from Zergenyi in the summer of 1989 and again in my visits with him in May and July 1990 and 1991. But in applying this method to my research, I had to confront not only the limitations of fieldwork data, but also my expectations of the fieldwork encounter in general and the folkloristic search for the story we expect to find lingering behind all expressive activity.

Crafting an object is at its most basic a personal act. Narrating its significance becomes a social act with the potential of enlarging the world of both the maker and the object. It is an interest in both personal and cultural meanings that encourages folklorists to seek the life stories that accompany folk art, for through the stories we may begin to understand the object not simply in formal or aesthetic terms, but in cultural terms. Narrative constructs meaningful connections for the audience between maker and object, and provides the researcher with the essential details of context and meaning.

Looking at the relationship between objects and stories focuses our attention on the object as a catalyst for narrative. The artist may create the object with a particular

event in mind or an event may stimulate creativity, but the object may not be directly representational of that event in such a way that the audience may "read" it like they do a written account. Its story, then, may be said to exist in potential and the telling of the story or stories is conditioned by the social context. Reflecting on Zergenyi's attitude toward the research, it became increasingly clear to me, however, that his need to be expressive was not necessarily a need to be autobiographical, even when the events motivating the expressive activity were inextricably linked to his life history.[42]

Folk art is a potential vehicle for discourse, but when conducting research we should honestly attempt to confront our expectations on the nature of that discourse. For artists like Zergenyi, the "narrative impulse"[43] is not necessarily self-directed, but remains for the most part oriented toward the object. Bringing the personal associations and significances to light through a social process like narration is not always desirable for the informant. As a folklorist, I can recognize the ways in which the events in Zergenyi's life have informed his work and I can piece together his life

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[42]Glassie makes a similar observation in Ballymenone where he writes, "the District's people caution us: not everyone has a life history. For some the full and true statement of the self would not be an autobiography, but a philosophical treatise," 742. See also C. M. Laurel Doucette, "The Emergence of New Expressive Skills in Retirement and Later Life in Contemporary Newfoundland," Ph.D. Thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1986, who contends late life creativity does not necessarily involve life review, 285ff.

[43]Jane C. Beck, "Always in Season: Folk Art and Traditional Culture in Vermont," Always in Season: Folk Art and Traditional Culture in Vermont, ed. Jane C. Beck (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Council on the Arts, 1982) 25.

history, but in doing so, I must also recognize that the expressive activity at the center of this research is not necessarily in itself an overt desire to tell that story.

Moving from stories to objects, the following chapter takes a closer look at the technical and thematic aspects of Zergenyi's carving, describing his initial involvement in the activity, the construction of the pieces, the diversity in his repertoire, and his desire to produce a collection of carvings.

CHAPTER FOUR

CARVING INFLUENCES, TECHNIQUES, AND REPERTOIRE

The wood-carver
said: I take a piece of wood. Then
I
knock

on it--I know
that somebody
lives
in there. When my carving

is done
I shall
see
who it is.[1]

Zergenyi chuckled bemusedly to himself as he considered my question on why wood carving versus some other art form. What made him chuckle, he explained, was the thought of how his father might have reacted to the idea of his son as a wood carver. He recalled an encounter they had during one of their hunting expeditions where the elder Zergenyi declared after watching his son cut wood for the evening's

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[1]Jan Erik Vold, "The Wood Carver," trans. Astrid Rudjord and Albert Ward, Stand 23 (1982): 26. Thanks to Gry Heggli for bringing this to my attention.

campfire that Andrew had very unskilled hands. He laughed again, reminded of the fact that neither he nor his father had much experience in the use of common tools:

> I never did anything with my knife. I cut only maybe in the hunting lodges bread with my knife. And my poor father says he never knows a boy who has as unskilled hands as I have. I told him, "Poppa, you are now forty-five or forty-two years old and you never even have a hammer in [your] hand. [2]

Unfortunately, Zergenyi's father would never witness the proficiency with which his son skilfully employed knives and paint brushes to transform broken branches and discarded ends of milled wood into intricately painted carvings.

Creating a three-dimensional figure from wood may be achieved by either of two processes, one where portions of the wood are removed and the other where pieces of wood are joined together. James Deetz calls the former process subtractive and the latter one additive, describing them as follows: "Subtractive manufacture involves the removal of raw material until the artifact emerges in finished form. . . an additive process [is] a process of accumulation."[3] While the majority of Zergenyi's carvings are produced through the additive process, some of his earliest and most significant work was created using the subtractive technique. He is also skilled in a style of decorative carving known as chip carving, which is a subtractive process

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[2]Notes, 17 May 1990, 3.

[3]James Deetz, Invitation to Archaeology (Garden City, NY: The Natural History P, 1967) 48. Cassell's Wood Carving (London: Cassell and Company, 1911) refers to the two types of carving as "carving in the round" and "built-up work." See the reprinted version, Paul N. Hasluck, ed., Manual of Traditional Wood Carving (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977).

where wood is chiselled out with small knives or gouges to create a design which stands in low relief to the surrounding background.[4]

In this chapter, I will review the circumstances which encouraged Zergenyi to take up woodcarving and will describe his development as a woodcarver. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first part examines his use of the chip carving technique, while the second part focuses on the production of three-dimensional forms. In both sections, I discuss sources for the carvings, technical aspects of their production, and the way in which his life experiences have shaped his repertoire both stylistically and thematically.

4.1. CHIP CARVINGS

Chip carving was a widely practiced form of decorative wood carving in Hungary over a long period of its history and was also well known in other parts of central and northern Europe.[5] Chip carved objects were certainly familiar to Zergenyi

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[4]The Manual of Traditional Wood Carving includes a chapter on chip carving which describes and illustrates the tools and techniques of production. Also featured are numerous examples of chip carving designs and motifs. See pages 466-493. Ivan H. Crowell's Chip Carving Patterns and Designs (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977) includes black and white drawings of patterns from western and northern Europe.

[5]See, for example, Edit Fél, Tamás Hofer, and Klára K.-Csilléry, Hungarian Peasant Art (Budapest: Corvina P, 1969), Károly Gink-Ivor and Sándor Kiss, Folk Art and Folk Artists (Budapest: Corvina P) 1968; Tamás Hofer and Edit Fél, Hungarian Folk Art (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979); János Manga, Herdsman's Art in Hungary (Budapest: Corvina P, 1972); Boris Zderciuc and Georgetta Stoica, Wood-Carving in the Romanian Folk Art (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1967). Outside of Hungary, see Ernst Schlee, German Folk Art, trans. Otto Ballin (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd.,

from his childhood home, although not to the extent that one may have found in early twentieth century dwellings of more agrarian people.[6] He recalled:

> My parents bought carvings from the Romanian-Hungarians in the Carpathian Mountains.... [They] bought a beautiful carved box, partly chip carved, partly figures in it. It was very, very expensive and very nice.[7]

As an adult, Zergenyi himself owned two large wooden blanket chests with delicately incised patterns of circles and stylized flowers.[8]

Attempting to determine the types of carvings which might have been familiar to Zergenyi from his childhood and early adult life, I showed him a book entitled Wood-Carving in the Romanian Folk Art and asked him if any of the pieces illustrated there looked particularly Hungarian to him. An elaborately carved distaff caught his eye and he confidently (and correctly) identified this piece as one made by Hungarians

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1980); Iona Plath, The Decorative Arts of Sweden (1948; New York: Dover Publications, 1966); Janice S. Stewart, The Folk Arts of Norway (1953; New York: Dover Publications, 1972. For illustrations of North American materials see Marian and Charles Klamkin, Wood Carvings (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1974).

[6]Cf. Hofer and Fél, 1979.

[7]Notes, 17 July 1991, 3. Linda Dégh comments on the use of folk art by the middle and upper classes at the turn of the century in Hungary in "Uses of Folklore as Expressions of Identity by Hungarians in the Old and New Country." Journal of Folklore Research 21 (1984): 191.

[8]Cf. Zdercuic and Stoica, figures 49 and 53.

living in Translyvania.[9] Handing the book back to me he said in reference to the objects illustrated there, "[These are] typical Hungarian things."[10]

While living in Austria among other displaced Hungarians, Zergenyi had the opportunity to personally observe the chip carving techniques of Francis Leicht, a "very skilled fellow," who was born and raised in Translyvania.[11] Leicht, also displaced by the war, came to Austria from the Hungarian border town of Sopron where members of Zergenyi's family had lived for years. He and other refugees used their traditional wood working skills as a way to earn money through the sale of carvings to American soldiers staying at a rest and recreation facility in nearby Gmunden, approximately thirty miles southwest of Linz.[12] Zergenyi decided that wood working skills could prove very useful in his uncertain future. Looking back years later on his reasons for taking up wood carving he said,

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[9]See figure 110 of the distaffs from the Apuseni Mountains in the Cluj Region of western Romania in Zderciuc and Stoica.

[10]Notes, 16 July 1991, 3.

[11]Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine the nature of Leicht's influence on Zergenyi's carving.

[12]Sally Peterson describes a similar pattern of using traditional skills to create marketable goods among the Laotian Hmong refugees living in Thailand in "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth," Journal of American Folklore 101 (1988): 6-22.

> I was preparing myself for retirement. Therefore I start these carvings. Even in Austria I was thinking what would happen to my family when I couldn't work anymore.[13]

The first piece chip carved by Zergenyi was a rectangular box which he made for his wife to carry her prayer book in (fig 31). "This was the very, very first thing that I carve," he said. "My wife always used it."[14] All six sides of the box are chip carved and the design was executed directly on the surface without the use of a hand drawn template to guide his cuts. The cover of the box features a cross as its central motif. Diagonal cuts emanating from the intersection of the arms of the cross create a symbolic unit resembling the lighted cross common in Christian iconography. Carved in the lower corners are two crests; on the right is the Hungarian coat of arms[15] and on the left is the coat of arms given to Hungarian war heroes like Zergenyi. A simplified version of Mrs. Zergenyi's family crest framed by crosses appears on one side[16] (fig

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[13]Notes, 17 May 1990, 5.

[14]Notes, 17 May 1990, 3.

[15]The Hungarian coat of arms, symbolically associated with independence and national identity, was a popular motif on a variety of handcrafted objects made during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Selmeczi Kovács Attila, A Magyar Nép Címere (Budapest: n.p., 1990) and Hofer and Fél, 41, and figures 116, 366, 367, 445, and 534. In Between the Woods and Water (1986; London: Penguin Books, 1988), Patrick Leigh Fermor describes a walking stick he was given by a Hungarian Count at whose home he had lodged for a night. The walking stick, hand carved by an old shepherd who used to work for the count, featured among other designs the arms of Hungary, 74.

[16]Missing from this version of the Svasties crest is a flexed arm holding a scimitar poised and ready for action. This element symbolizes the wars waged against the Turks during their occupation of Hungary in the seventeenth century. More elaborate

32) and a stylized floral motif completes the decoration on the sides and bottom of the box. Stylistically, the prayer book box is in keeping with a Hungarian tradition of creating highly detailed chip carved objects, sometimes to the point that the carving renders an otherwise utilitarian object useful only for decorative purposes.[17]

Zergenyi turned to wood carving as a way to supplement the family's meager income and also as a means of alleviating the intense depression he experienced living as a refugee in Austria. As a manual task, carving certainly functioned as a healthy diversion. Perhaps equally beneficial was the opportunity to work with forms reminiscent of his native Hungary. Thus, the chip carving provided a way of maintaining symbolic connections to familiar forms and places and, in the process, a means of constructively confronting the overwhelming feelings of loss he experienced as a displaced person. Chip carving, then, wasn't simply a distraction, it was a way of reaffirming identities and symbolically fostering connections to a place he was compelled to leave, but to which he remained deeply attached.[18] Although he dwelled physically in Austria, emotionally and spiritually he remained in Hungary and through the chip carving he could begin, however tenuously, to bridge those separate worlds.

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versions of the crest, like one embroidered on a pillow made by Mrs. Zergenyi, actually include the decapitated head of the defeated Turk. For an illustration of this crest see Carl-Alexander von Volborth (Poole: Blandford P, 1981) 121, number 752.

[17]Fèl, Hofer, and K.-Csilléry 16 and 24.

[18] Wass writes, "the more one has to fight and suffer in order to keep his identity, the more he clings to the silent expression of his heritage." The Translyvanian Hungarian Folk Art: Its Origins and Interpretations (Astor, FL: Danubian P, 1983) 10.

Figure 31. This box is the first piece carved by Zergenyi. He gave it to his wife to keep her prayer book in. Note the stylized crests of Hungary in the lower right and left corners. (Dimensions: 7 ins. L, 5.5 ins. H, 2.5 ins. W.)

Figure 32. Detail of one side of the prayer book box featuring a simplified version of Mrs. Zergenyi's family crest.

Like his fellow carvers, Zergenyi made chip carved boxes mostly for sale to American soldiers on leave in Gmunden who purchased them for souvenirs. He would also exchange boxes with the soldiers for sweets (a scarce commodity in post war Austria) for his daughter, who was then in her early teens. These boxes, square in shape and somewhat larger than the prayer book box, were purchased ready made. The box was decorated with chip-carved designs on the top and sides. Zergenyi recalled he had only "a very bad knife" with which to accomplish this work.

The prayer book box is the only chip-carved piece from that period in the family's possession today, but Zergenyi also made chip-carved boxes after he settled in the United States. As in Austria, he would buy prefabricated square boxes and chip carve decorative designs on the top and sides. An example of this later work is a square box featuring Zergenyi's crest on the right and that of his wife's family on the left (fig 33). One of the finest pieces made in this style is one which combines chip carving with bas reliefs of animal figures (fig 34). Here the chip carving forms a frame around the central figure of a stag.[19] On the sides of the box are carved a woodcock, grouse, mallard drake, and capercaillie, which are also partially framed by chip-carved panels. Zergenyi made this box for his daughter Maria and the wildlife depicted were of great significance as they were animals he especially enjoyed hunting back home in Hungary. The box is one that holds special meaning for Maria, in part

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[19]The stag was one of the more popular decorative motifs on traditional Hungarian artifacts. See for example figures 29, 282, 364, 382, and 598 in Hofer and Fél.

Figure 33. Chip carved box featuring Mrs. Zergenyi's family crest on the left and the Hungarian crest on the right. Zergenyi was entitled to use the latter in recognition of his heroic service to the country during World War I. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 7.5 ins. L, 8.5 ins. W, 3 ins. H.)

Figure 34. Box combining chip carving and animal motifs. A stag is featured on the cover and a mallard drake in flight on the side. A woodcock, grouse, and capercaillie decorate the other sides. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 6.25 ins. L, 8 ins. W, 3.5. ins H including the lid.)

because she understands the symbolic connections those animals hold for her father and perhaps ultimately for herself.

Sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s Zergenyi purchased a lathe and began making his own boxes, a process he found particularly rewarding. "I love to make boxes," he said quite earnestly one day. "You take a lump of wood in and a nice box comes out."[20] On a later occasion he went so far as to say, "I like the lathe work the best."[21] The pieces illustrated in figures 35, 36, and 37 are examples of some of the lathe-turned boxes made.

He used relatively few motifs to create a variety of chip carved patterns. Based on the chip carved boxes I have examined, two primary decorative motifs can be isolated: a stylized flower pattern (fig 38) and a leaf pattern (fig 39), both of which can be seen on the prayer book box.[22] Designs were initially worked out on paper (fig 40) and the completed sketch was then transferred on to the surface of the box using tracing paper. Wood falling outside of the pencil lines is carefully chipped out to reveal the pattern.

There is a visual tension in the chip carved designs created by the juxtaposition of dynamic patterns and static borders. The borders serve to delineate one motif or

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[20]Notes, 12 July 1989, 2.

[21]Notes, 17 May 1990, 2.

[22]Versions of these motifs appear on the distaff he identified as being particularly Hungarian in Zdercinc and Stoica, figure 110.

Figure 35. Lathe turned, chip carved box featuring a combination of the floral and leaf motifs. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 7 ins. diameter, 4 ins. H.)

Figure 36. Lathe turned, chip carved box featuring leaf motif. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 7 ins. diameter, 3 ins. H.)

Figure 37. Lathe turned, chip carved box featuring a variation of the leaf motif. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 4.25 ins. top diameter, 4 ins. base diameter, 1.25 ins. H.)

Figure 38. Detail of figure 35 showing floral motif.

Figure 39. Detail of figure 36 showing leaf motif.

Figure 40. Page from one of Zergenyi's sketchbooks showing sketches of various chip carving patterns.

design from another, effectively containing and controlling the inherently dynamic pattern. A similar balance between movement and calm can be seen in other examples of Hungarian traditional art including textiles, pottery, and furniture where borders are used to divide and articulate vibrant decorative patterns.[23] As such, alternating motifs separated by plain, narrow borders may have been aesthetically pleasing to Zergenyi on a cultural level. On a more personal level, however, I can only speculate on how the chip carved patterns may have reflected deeper emotional concerns. Perhaps, the lack of control in his own life was compensated in some small way by working out designs which are themselves highly controlled, thus providing Zergenyi with a modicum of comfort or reassurance.

Zergenyi claims his designs are original, although some of the patterns he "created" can also be found on chip carved items across Europe and North America. Given the information I have, it is difficult to determine the influence of traditional designs on his work. He was certainly exposed to traditional chip carving patterns both at home on furniture owned by his parents and in the work of carvers he observed while living in Austria. The actual origins of the chip carved patterns, however, appear to be less important than understanding the value placed on personal creativity. In her work with the Pueblo potters, Ruth Bunzel found that even as they

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[23]For a list of works on Hungarian folk art see footnote 5. Karen Lux notes that Luthuanian cane carver Joseph Mender, a contemporary of Zergenyi's, used geometric patterns from traditional embroideries and weavings in creating the designs on his canes. In "The Making of 'God's Mother is the Morning Star:' A Case Study in Videotaping an Elderly Folk Artist," New York Folklore 15 (1990): 35.

employed traditional motifs, the potters scorned copying the patterns of others and even repeating one's own, thus placing a positive value on the creation of new designs.[24] Gerald Pocius found a similar tendency in his research on Newfoundland furniture where novel types and stylistic elements were consistently adapted and incorporated into the local repertoire such that furniture making "became a powerful vehicle through which residents could competitively assert their individuality."[25] And Michael Owen Jones concludes, "there is much original thought and expression in what people make and do in daily life."[26] Thus for Zergenyi, as well as for other artists, there appears to be a need to express creatively personal visions and aesthetics or at least to conceive of their work in these terms. In doing so, the artists privilege their own contributions to "the tradition" and by asserting their individuality stress they are not merely conforming to conventional rules, but instead using those rules

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[24]Ruth Bunzel, The Pueblo Potter (1929; New York: AMS P, 1969) 52-53. See as well Franz Boas, Primitive Art (1927; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955) 156-158. Gregory Gizelis contends that "folklorists have failed to stress the importance of . . . real creation" in their discussion of tradition and creativity. In "A Neglected Aspect of Creativity of Folklore Performers," Journal of American Folklore 86 (1973): 167.

[25]Gerald L. Pocius, "Gossip, Rhetoric, and Objects: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Newfoundland Furniture," Perspectives on American Furniture, ed. Gerald W. R. Ward (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988) 344. See also pages 311-317.

[26]Michael Owen Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1975) 73, 68-74. Jones takes up the issue of creativity and tradition in "'There's Gotta Be New Designs Once in Awhile': Culture Change and the 'Folk' Arts," Southern Folklore Quarterly 36 (1972): 43-60.

creatively.[27] Given the time in his life in which Zergenyi was making these boxes the need to be original may very well have been linked to his need to feel productive. Like the Pueblo potters, he prided himself on not simply copying designs, but on applying his knowledge creatively.

The chip-carved boxes were typically finished with a coating of oil or varnish. A few, however, were also painted including the cover of one box which features a blue jay sitting on an oak branch (fig 41). Looking at this piece one day, Zergenyi asked, mostly to himself, "what idea did I have here?"[28] This box was clearly related both stylistically and thematically to other pieces like the stag box, for example, where a chip carved border framed a central image. Unlike the stag box featuring carved figures, the blue jay is painted directly on the surface of the wood and as such is very much like a series of wall plaques he began to produce in the 1970s and 1980s expressly for sale to the arts and crafts market. These round, seven-inch diameter pine plaques were purchased from a craft supply store, although he also made a few

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[27]Elli Köngäs Maranda makes this point in "Individual and Tradition," Studia Fennica 20 (1976): 261 as does Edward Ives in "A Man and His Song: Joe Scott and 'The Plain Golden Band,'" in Glassie, Ives, and Szwed, 80. Daniel P. Biebuyck briefly discusses the relationship between conformity and creativity in traditional performances in the introduction to Tradition and Creativity in Tribal Art (Berkeley: U of California P, 1969) 9-14. The role of the individual in tradition is also explored by Roger Abrahams in "Creativity, Individuality, and The Traditional Singer," Studies in the Literary Imagination 3 (1970): 5-34 and by Charles Briggs in The Woodcarvers of Cordova, New Mexico: Social Dimensions of an Artistic Revival (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1980).

[28]Notes, 17 May 1990, 2.

Figure 41. Box decorated with blue jays and chip carved border. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 7 ins. diameter, 2 ins. H.)

himself on the lathe. Zergenyi would chip carve the border and then paint a bird scene in the center portion (fig 42). The results were not unlike the cover on the box he had puzzled over and in fact one of the plaques which hung on the living room wall in his Freeville home featured a version of the very blue jay scene he found so curious (fig. 43, cf. fig 41). Because these plaques were made expressly to sell, Zergenyi initialled them with a stylized "ZA" thinking that by signing the pieces hewould enhance their market value. Few other of his pieces are personalized in this manner (fig 44).[29]

The wall plaques were not Zergenyi's first attempt at bas-relief carving. During the mid 1950s through the early 1960s, he made several two dimensional bald eagle carvings modeled after the eagle on the Great Seal of the United States. While he is somewhat vague as to what prompted him to take up this subject, he thinks it might have been by request. One unusually large version, measuring approximately four feet by two and a half feet is one of the finest examples of his eagle carvings (fig 45), rivalled perhaps only by one which his daughter has on display in the hallway of her home. Zergenyi received public confirmation of his carving skills when the eagle carving won first prize at the New York State Fair in Syracuse, New York some time in the late 1950s.

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[29]Zergenyi did make a number of signed duck carvings for a Filipino student at Cornell with whom he had become quite friendly. The student had asked Zergenyi to sign the carvings in order to ensure that they would be considered works of art when he returned to the Philippines.

Figure 42. Plaque with meadowlarks and chip carved border. (Dimensions: 7 ins. diameter.)

Figure 43. Wall plaque featuring a blue jay surrounded by a chip carved border. Cf. figure 41. (Dimensions: 7 ins. diameter.)

Figure 44. An example of Zergenyi's initials carved in the base of one of his first carvings. With the exception of the wall plaques, few of his pieces are signed or initialed with "ZA."

Figure 45. Eagle wall plaque hanging in the hallway of Zergenyi's home in Freeville, NY. (Dimensions: 4 ft. H, 2.5 ft. W.)

Persuaded by some of his friends, Zergenyi became involved in showing his work at the Tompkins County (NY) Fair, and his success there encouraged him to participate in the state fair held annually in Syracuse. He won numerous awards for his work, frequently placing first in a number of categories. For a variety of reasons he stopped participating in the fair competitions in the early 1960s, but he did find the experience a rewarding one and is pleased to be a recipient of not only the awards, but also, and perhaps most importantly, he was honored by the public recognition of his role as a wood carver--a recognition he would continue to seek in other ways, although never quite so successfully.

The unusually large bald eagle carving was made by Zergenyi not long after his arrival in the United States. His interpretation of this popular subject exhibits only minor variations from the national symbol and includes the important symbolic elements of the olive branch, arrows, and flag.[30] Although this version of the eagle is distinctly emblematic of America, the United States was not the only country to use the eagle as a national symbol. At various points in their histories the Austrian Empire, Germany, Russia, and Poland used a version of this mascot as a national

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[30]The popularity of the bald eagle with wood carvers is well documented in Klamkin and Klamkin, 19. Elinor Lander Horwitz claims that in the United States "no patriotic symbol has been used so commonly as the bald eagle or in such a stunning profusion of forms." In The Bird, the Banner, and Uncle Sam (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976) 35.

symbol.[31] Elinor Horwitz asserts that the bald eagle is "a time-honored symbol of independence, freedom, and strength."[32]

Considering the symbolism of this bird in the context of Zergenyi's life as a displaced person and recent immigrant, one can only wonder if and how he identified with the eagle on a symbolic level. Perhaps carving the eagle functioned as a means of negotiating identities in the same way as the prayer book box. Once again, Zergenyi found himself emotionally rooted in one place and physically located in another, a place toward which he felt a mixture of gratitude and resentment. How might manipulating the national symbol of the United States reflect his attitudes? His grandson Tom offered the following interpretation of the eagle carvings his grandfather made:

> I always interpreted these as an expression of gratitude for his adopted land and its freedoms--the immigrant's thanks. I still feel these are some of his most intricate and powerful carvings.[33]

While Zergenyi was very appreciative of the opportunities life in the United States offered him and his family, he could not completely divest himself of the resentment he felt toward American involvement in Europe during the Second World War. Thus, the eagle carving may have functioned as a powerful mediator between the personal world of the unsettled immigrant and public policies of his adopted country.

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[31]See Volborth.

[32]Horwitz 38.

[33]Tom Doolittle, letter to the author, 13 August 1991.

The size of the carving may also have been a form of commentary by the carver. Kenneth Goldstein describes bigness as a European-American folk aesthetic, noting that size and quantity in various expressive forms are highly valued by both performers and audiences. Likewise, he notes a counteraesthetic which sees bigness as "gross, indecent, overstated, ostentatious, and tasteless."[34] The opposing aesthetics, he argues, reflect class differences where small is associated with the elite and big with the ordinary folk. Thus, the production of such an atypically large carving of the national symbol of the United States may have subtly reflected Zergenyi's expectations of or ideas about the nature and character of his adopted country.

My reading of the eagle carving is that it has embodied all of these meanings at one time or another since its making. Hung in a prominent, albeit liminal, position in the hallway of his home, the carving was clearly on view for more than thirty years. During these years, how Zergenyi felt about this rendition, his rendition, of the American national symbol was surely tied to his ambivalent feelings toward his adopted country. Like his refusal to become a United States citizen, the eagle carving functioned as a daily reminder of all that he had lost and some of what he had gained. The eagle's symbolic qualities of independence, freedom and strength were not lost on Zergenyi; instead, they were continually replayed and re-evaluated within the various contexts of his life experience.

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[34]Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Notes Toward A European American Folk Aesthetic," Journal of American Folklore 104 (1991): 177.

4.2. THREE-DIMENSIONAL CARVINGS

Zergenyi began to carve three-dimensional figures while living in Austria and recalls being inspired to do so in a kind of supernatural way. Walking outside following a rainstorm he came upon a maple branch broken off by the wind: "After the storm. The storm broke down the maple branch. Here it is," he says, holding up an unpainted carving of two penguins for me to see (fig 46). "That was in it. I see here a branch. Here is the wood (stretching his hands out approximately three feet to illustrate the length of the branch). I see that there are birds in it. It's funny, you know," he says shaking his head and laughing softly as he remembers the day. "It wasn't normal. As I throw the wood away the bird is standing there."[35]

I asked him on several occasions how he might account for or explain this "vision."[36] His responses were varied. Once he said he couldn't explain where it came from; another time he explained the vision as a kind of reward for the assistance given to refugees fleeing Hungary and in Austria acting as a translator for those who could not speak German. Although he considered his vision to be an extraordinary experience, saying "it wasn't normal," it is not uncommon for artists working in a variety of media to credit visions and also dreams for their initial, and often continuing, inspiration. Charleston blacksmith Philip Simmons describes his visionary experiences:

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[35]Notes, 17 May 1990, 3.

[36]Maria Doolittle, letter to the author, March 1990.

Figure 46. The two penguins carved from the maple branch broken down by the storm. Given to his daughter Maria. (Dimensions: 3 ins. H including base, 2.75 ins. W.)

> I have a vision. I have a tremendous vision. Every so often it comes over me. I never dream about it. I get a tremendous vision every so often.[37]

And Theora Hamblett, a memory painter from Oxford, Mississippi, recalled one of her experiences:

> I had a stroke on February 4, 1974 and I had to stay in the hospital. . . . And the first morning when I woke up I saw a vision on those walls. . . . Before, I'd often had my visions only momentarily, and they were gone in a few seconds. But after that stroke, this vision of the vines lingered and lingered.[38]

Hamblett also described dreams as a source of inspiration for her paintings.[39] Ruth Bunzel found several potters reporting dreams as the source of their designs. The following is a representative sample:

> One night I dreamed and saw lots of large jars and they all had designs on them. I looked at them and got the designs in my head and next morning I painted them. I often dream about designs, and if I can remember them, I paint them (Hopi).[40]

Likewise, Michael Jones quotes Appalachian chairmaker Chester Cornett as saying several of his chairs "had appeared to him at night just before he went to sleep. . . ."[41] The visionary experience is typically seen as having an other-worldly quality and is

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[37]John Michael Vlach, Charleston Blacksmith: The Work of Philip Simmons (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1981) 91.

[38]William Ferris, Local Color (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982) 96.

[39]Ferris 84-85.

[40]Bunzel 51.

[41]Michael Owen Jones, Craftsman of the Cumberlands, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series (Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 1989) 66.

also characterized as largely an unsolicited experience which, depending on the individual's spirituality, may be explained as a gift from God.[42] Sculptor James "Son Ford" Thomas from Leland, Mississippi says, "The dreams just come to me."[43]

Contained in the broken maple branch Zergenyi found lying on the ground were three carvings in all. In addition to the carving of the two penguins previously mentioned, there was a single penguin and a capercaillie (fig 47). Using the subtractive technique, Zergenyi liberated the forms from their surrounding wooden matrix and all three carvings retain an emergent quality. This is especially true of the capercaillie where the jagged edge of the broken branch reminds the viewer of the branch's original state as part of a tree.

His description of the vision was not the first time Zergenyi had made reference to the belief that a figure lies inside a block of wood. "In a piece of wood there is everything," he said. "What you don't need you take away."[44] He reiterated this point the following day: "You have to throw away what doesn't belong to it. And then you have the bird."[45] Other wood carvers have similarly described carving as a

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[42]Artists also actively seek inspiration. Bunzel reported that many of the potters spend sleepless nights trying to come up with new designs, 51. As well, Theora Hamblet reports praying for inspiration and ascribed to her prayers a subsequent dream which she used as a source for one of her paintings; in Ferris 84-86.

[43]Ferris 150.

[44]Notes, 30 July 1989, 1.

[45]Notes, 13 July 1989, 1

Figure 47. The capercaillie and penguins carved from the maple branch broken down by the storm. (Capercaillie dimensions: 4 ins. H, 4 ins. W.)

process of extracting or releasing a figure embedded inside the wooden substrate. A wood carver from New Jersey's Pine Barrens observes, "The bird is in there--you have to release it"[46] and similarly a wood carver from Central Bridge, New York says, "There is a bird in that piece of wood. . . . It's my job to bring the right one out."[47] Mary Hufford considers statements like these so common as to be "a formulaic attitude among carvers."[48]

To the best of my knowledge, all of Zergenyi's early three-dimensional work was produced using the subtractive method including a capercaillie, which he made for the Duke of Bedford, and a pair of bald eagles and their nesting young. Both pieces, which were made in England sometime in the early 1950s, are frequently mentioned by him. He recalled working on the eagle carving for months using only "one gouge and my knife." He gave it away just before leaving England in 1952. Another significant piece carved in this style is of two grazing moose inspired by a photograph of a diorama featuring moose at the Museum of Natural History in New York City (fig 48). Although mastering the skills of the subtractive method conferred a sense of

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[46]Mary Hufford, One Space, Many Places (Washington: American Folklife Center, 1986) 67.

[47]Bruce Buckley, Folk Arts: Living Traditions (Cobleskill, NY: Schoharie County Arts Council, 1989) 40.

[48]Hufford 67. See as well Klamkin and Klamkin's comments on the subtractive technique of carving, 129.

Figure 48. Inspired by a photograph of a diorama at the Museum of Natural History in New York City, this carving of moose was made from a single piece of wood. Zergenyi repaired the broken antler in 1990. (Dimensions: 9.5 ins. L, 15 ins. W., 8 ins. H.)

pride and accomplishment,[49] it was, however, both a time-consuming and physically and psychologically demanding carving technique. Finely detailed subtractive carving requires patience, concentration, a steady hand, and the ability to "see" the form housed inside the block of wood. A misplaced cut, a slip of the knife, or too heavy a hand could ruin a carving and mistakes were difficult, often impossible, to correct. The additive technique, which is a much more expedient form of carving where mistakes can more easily be corrected,[50] attracted Zergenyi's attention and it wasn't long before this became his preferred method of carving.

The living room of his Freeville home was his work shop, a favorite over-stuffed armchair surrounded by cardboard boxes filled with miscellaneous pieces of wood, paint brushes, paints, sketch pads, tracing paper, knives, and other tools--all coated with a fine layer of sawdust--was his work bench (fig 49). His reference library was an adjacent bookshelf overflowing with nature books and magazines which he avidly read. Two books in particular were always close at hand; one a world atlas, the other Birds of the World,[51] the source of many of his carving ideas.

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[49]The wood carvers featured in Simon J. Bronner, The Chain Carvers: Old Men Crafting Meaning (Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 1985) repeatedly expressed pride in their ability to extract intricate carvings from a single piece of wood.

[50]Deetz 48-49.

[51]Oliver Austin, Jr., Birds of the World (New York: Golden P, 1961).

Figure 49. The living room of Zergenyi's home in Freeville, NY, May 1990. Zergenyi did much of his carving and painting here.

"If you can draw a bird, you can carve it," maintains Zergenyi.[52] "Everybody can do this I believe if he has the patience and the interest."[53] Successful carving requires skills similar to those used in hunting: good eyes, steady hands and nerves, patience, knowledge of the habits of game, and an abiding interest in the pursuit. The Manual of Traditional Wood Carving describes the requisite skills for successful wood carving:

> Wood carving calls for the exercise of manual skill and artistic feeling. Both of these are essential to the production of any good piece of carved work. Manual skill comes from the knowledge of the shapes and uses of tools and by putting this knowledge into actual practice. Artistic feeling is largely instinctive, but it can also be inculcated and developed.[54]

Conceptualizing the form in the wood in additive carving is not unlike that in subtractive processes and in both styles of carving Zergenyi says he imagines the piece from above. Considerations like these are important when deciding which pieces of wood are suitable for the various parts of the body, where to place the drawing on the wooden block, and where to begin cutting. As Floyd Bennington, an Indiana carver, said, "You have to see in that block what you're going to make. You're going to have to see that chain or horse or dog, whatever it is you're making."[55]

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[52]Notes, 23 June 1989, 2.

[53]Notes, 18 May 1990, 4.

[54]Hasluck 1.

[55]Bronner 104.

Zergenyi begins each carving on paper. "You have to make sketches," he says, "hundreds of them."[56] Multiple sketches were used to work out both the general form of the carving as well as details of attitude and stance. They were particularly useful when using the additive technique as the carving consists of several pieces of wood glued together to form the whole figure. The sketches vary in detail from an outline of the form (fig 50, cf. fig 17) to more detailed drawings of the feather patterns (fig 51). A completed sketch is then copied on to tracing paper. Carbon paper is placed between the tracing paper sketch and the block of wood and the figure is retraced, transferring the outline of the form on to the wood. The head and body of the bird are made from a single piece of wood. Separate pieces of wood are laminated to the sides of the center piece and these are shaped into the wings (fig 52). Depending on the size of the carving and the width of boards he is working with, Zergenyi may add multiple pieces of wood to each side of the center section in order to create a fuller body. Generally, smaller carvings are made from three pieces of wood, while larger ones require additional pieces attached to either side. Miniature carvings, those measuring only a few inches or so in length and width, are often carved from a single piece of wood. Basswood is the wood of choice as it is straight-grained, easy tocarve, and relatively accessible in the northeastern United States, but he has also used white pine and has experimented with other woods like pear and maple.

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[56]Notes, 16 May 1990, 3.

Figure 50. Sketch of a ruddy duck from Zergenyi's sketchbook. Cf. fig 17.

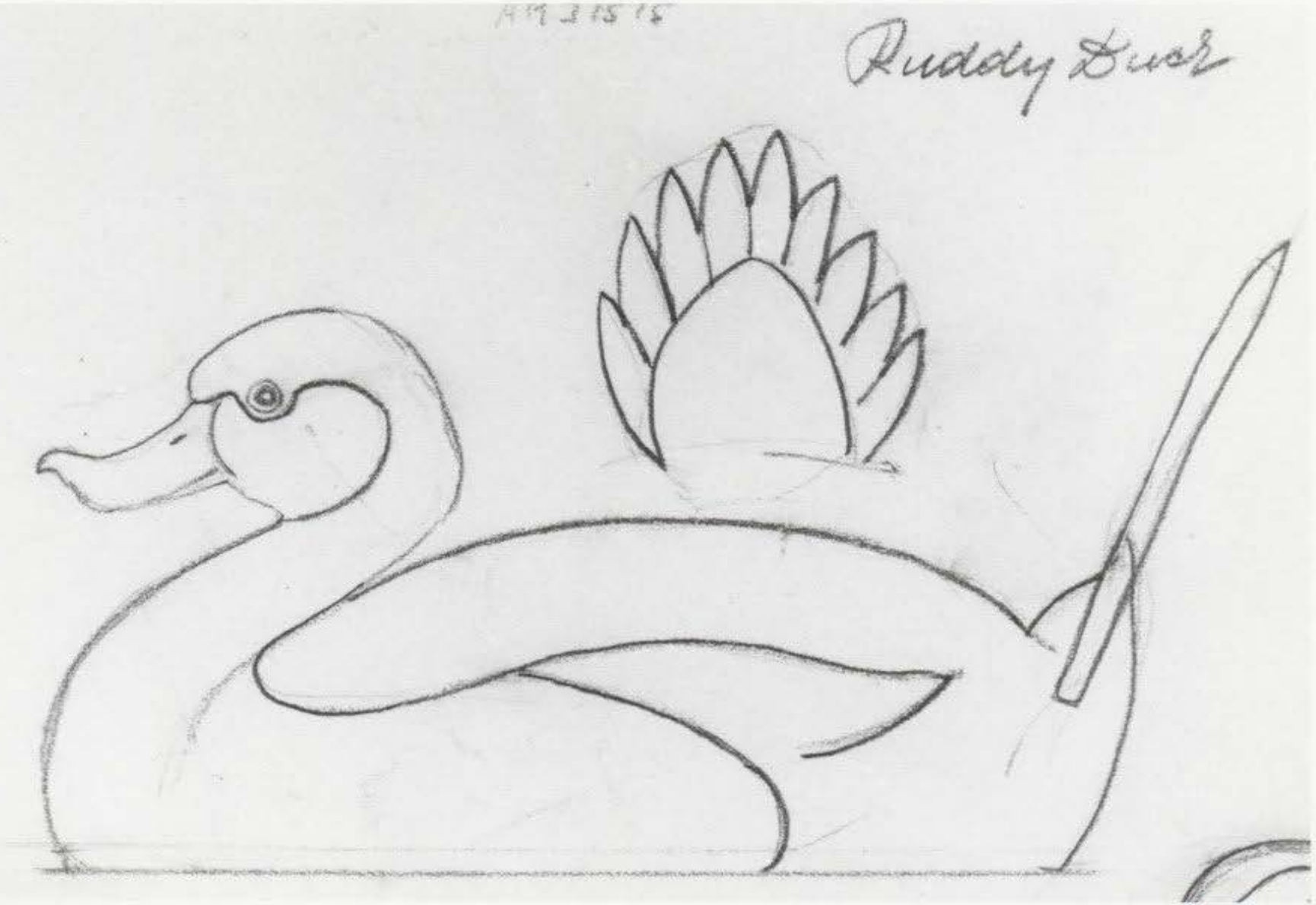

AM 3515
Ruddy Duck

Figure 51. Page from Zergenyi's sketchbook showing detailed sketches of various birds.

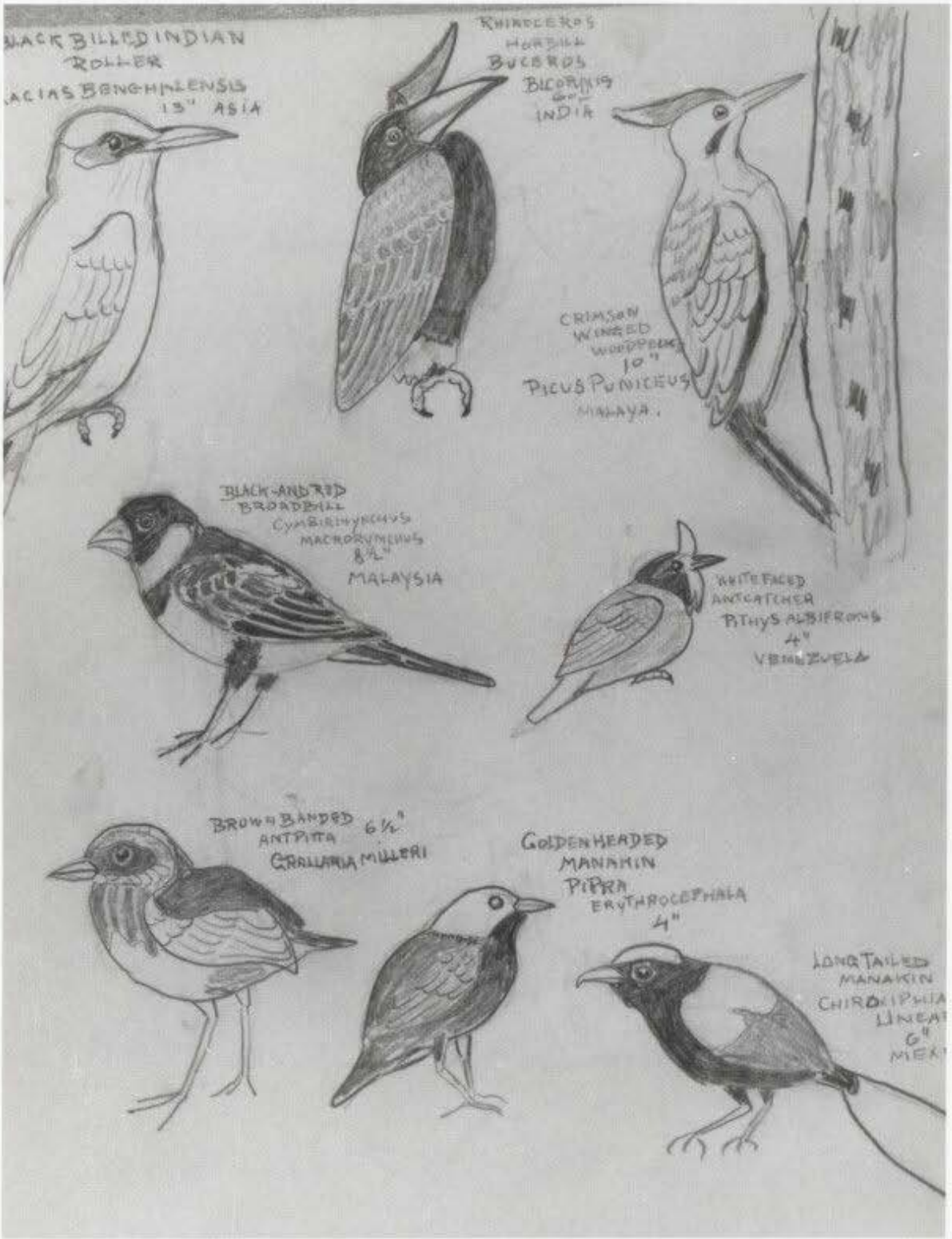
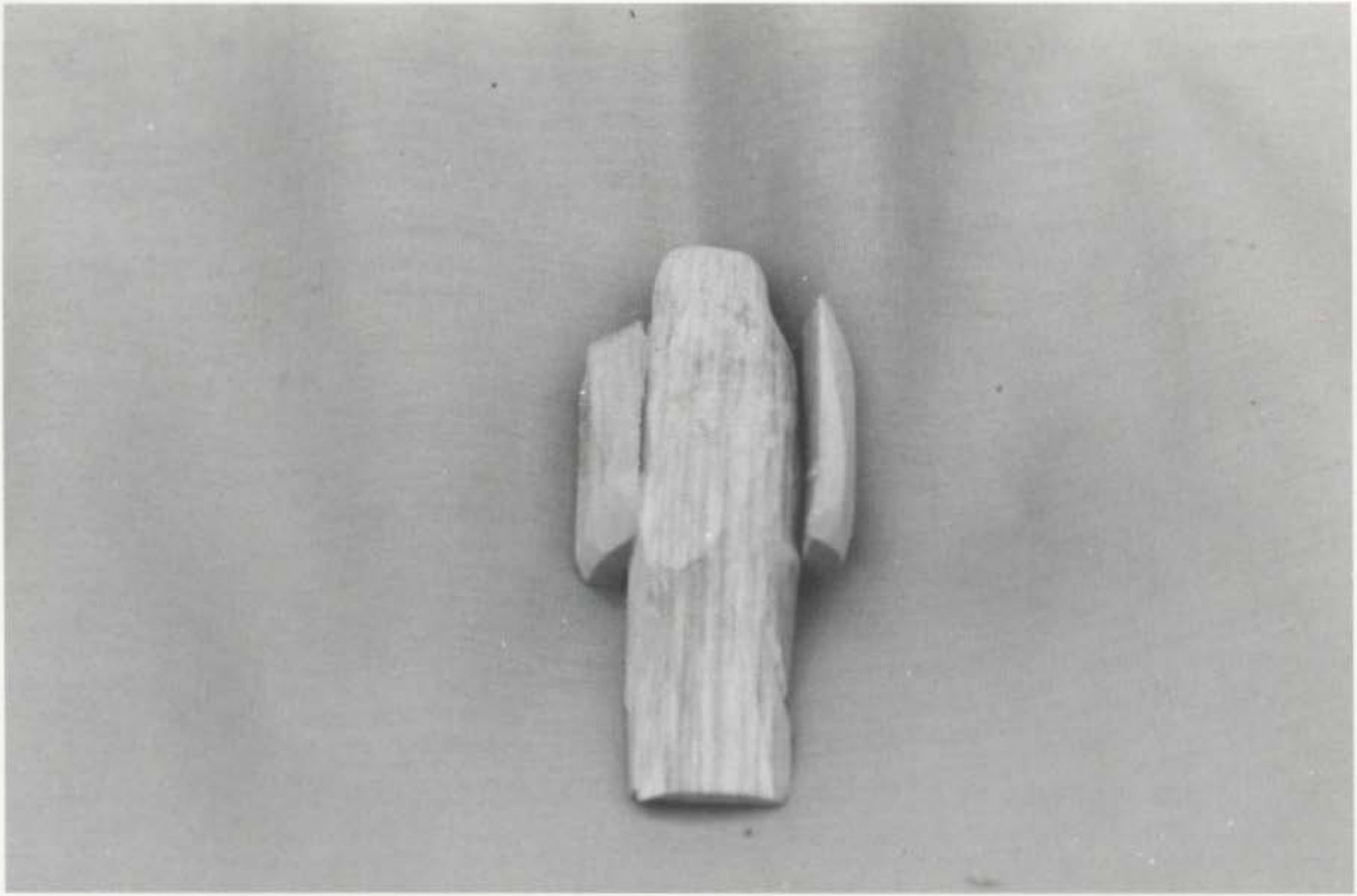

BLACK BILLED INDIAN ROLLER
LACIAS BENGHALENSIS 13" ASIA
RHINOCEROS HORNBILL BUCEROS BICORNIS 20" INDIA
CRIMSON WINGED WOODPECKER 10"
PICUS PUNICEUS MALAYA.
BLACK-AND RED BROADBILL CYMBIRHYNCHUS MACRORHYNCHUS 8½" MALAYSIA
WHITE FACED ANTCATCHER PITHYS ALBIFRONS 4" VENEZUELA
BROWN BANDED ANTPITTA 6½" GRALLARIA MILLERI
GOLDEN HEADED MANAKIN PIPRA ERYTHROCEPHALA 4"
LONG TAILED MANAKIN CHIROXIPHIA LINEAT 6" MEX

Figure 52. Carving in the early stages showing center piece and side pieces which will be fashioned into wings. (Dimensions: 3.5 ins. L, 1.75 ins. W.)



Zergenyi uses a band saw to cut out the rough form which he then refines with the use of a carving knife (fig 53) and a power sander (fig 54).[57] After the carving is completed the figure is painted with an undercoating of gesso, a white primer which seals the wood insuring that the final coat of paint is not absorbed by the porous wood.[58] The detailed feather pattern is drawn on with pencil (fig 55) and then painted using acrylics. He has used oil paints, but prefers acrylics because they are cheaper, easier to work with, and dry quickly. When the painting is completed, the finished piece is sprayed with a clear sealant. Zergenyi recalled he would alternate carving and painting, carving several birds at a time and then painting them, rather than working on each individual piece from start to finish.

Of the two processes, Zergenyi finds carving more difficult than painting, although the painting is far more detailed than the carving.[59] He contends that the carving takes more time and skill than the painting which he says goes very fast, although he did indicate that after the first fifty or so birds, the carving became easier because he had mastered the basic technique. All of his carvings are painted with the

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[57]The steps outlined here for making a carving are similar to those of other bird carvers. See Martha and Bob Cochran, "An Interview with Brice Tyler--Bird Carver," New York Folklore Quarterly 29 (1973): 26-30.

[58]Gesso is commonly used by woodcarvers as a primer or undercoating. See Phyllis Méras, A Yankee Way With Wood (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975) 11 and 14.

[59]He may also find painting easier as he dabbled in it as a child. His favorite subjects were natural scenes and animals in the zoos he often visited.

Figure 53. Zergenyi shaping the side pieces into wings with a carving knife, December 1990.

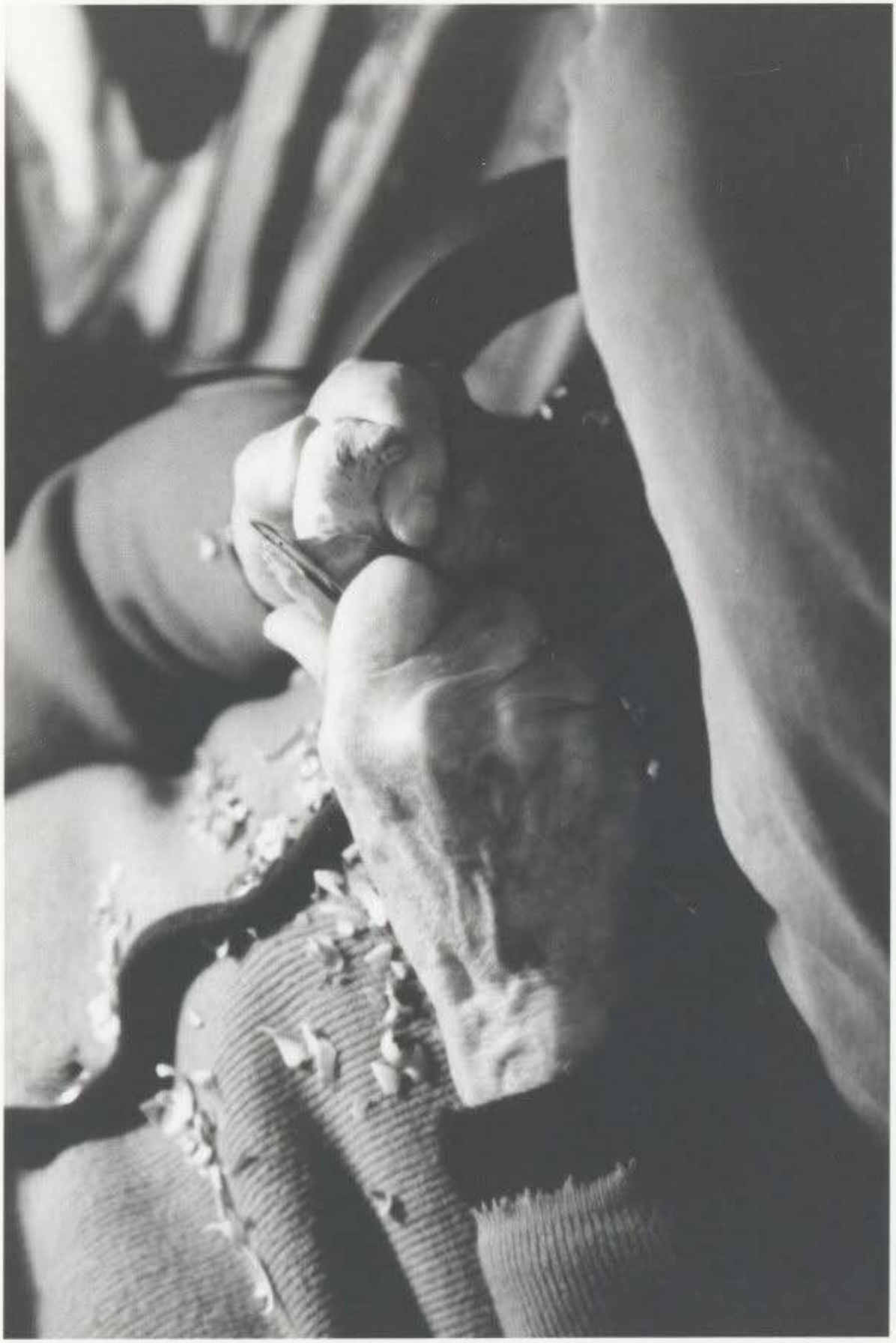

Figure 54. Zergenyi refining the wings with a power sander, December 1990.

Figure 55. The carving completed, the piece is painted with an undercoating of gesso and the feather pattern is penciled on the form. This piece was part of an ensemble of blackburnian warblers Zergenyi gave to his granddaughter-in-law Jan Blackburn.

notable exceptions of the chip carved boxes and the two penguin carvings he made from the fallen maple branch. Zergenyi calls unpainted birds "naked" and says "they look really bad."[60] One day I asked him to identify an unpainted carving I had come across and he said he couldn't tell what it was as it wasn't painted. It is in the process of "clothing" the carvings with painted feathers that a basic shape is transformed into a distinctive species. Unpainted, the carvings are stylistically quite similar with their broad shoulders, full, rounded breasts, and smooth, blocky bodies (fig 56). Zergenyi did not carve each feather in the style made famous by the Ward Brothers from Maryland.[61] Instead, he used paint to define the feather pattern and achieved realistic likenesses in his carvings through the careful layering and juxtaposition of color. As one admirer of his work commented, "He makes up with the paint for the carving."[62] Unlike some bird carvers, Zergenyi rarely relied on bird skins as models for his carvings although he acknowledges his carvings would have been more accurate had he done so.[63] Instead, he depended on years of experience in

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[60]Notes, 27 July 1989, 2.

[61]See Barry R. Berkey, Pioneer Decoy Carvers: A Biography of Lemuel and Stephen Ward (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publications, 1977).

[62]John King, personal interview, 27 July 1990.

[63]Renowned Maine carver Wendell Gilley was already an experienced taxidermist when he took up wood carving, in Méras, 8. Michael Deschamps, a highly skilled woodcarver who has created award winning carvings using wood burning techniques, told me he often keeps skins in his freezer, taking them out for consultation on form and feather pattern, personal interview, July 1986.

Figure 56. Mandarin duck carving showing the broad shoulders and full, rounded breasts characteristic of Zergenyi's work.

observing, banding, collecting, and hunting birds as well as the knowledge gained through intensive study of the subject. He cites several books which served as sources of ideas for his carvings, but Arthur Singer's illustrations in Oliver L. Austin, Jr.'s Birds of the World served as his primary reference work. And while he also consulted the work of well-known wildlife painters like Roger Tory Peterson and Louis Fuertes Agassiz, he likes Singer's depictions of birds the best. Zergenyi often worked directly from Singer's illustrations, replicating his use of color, stance, and setting as the comparison of the illustration (fig 57) and carving of the ornate hawk demonstrate (fig 58). While Zergenyi was inspired by Singer and used him as a model, he did not simply copy the illustrations. Much of his own skill and artistry was applied in translating the two-dimensional images into three-dimensional forms (figs 59, 60, 61, and 62). He also drew ideas from other bird books in his small library as well as from magazines like International Wildlife and National Geographic, but any illustration of birds might catch his eye and serve as a model. An ensemble of grouse he carved is reported to have been inspired by an illustration on the cover of the Freeville phone book.[64]

Some of his earlier bird carvings were mounted on round bases which were also carved using a combination of chip carving and open work designs (see fig 3).

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[64]Claudine Weatherford describes painter Queena Stovall's reliance on illustrations from magazines and newspapers as a means to "guide her artistic expression" and to assist her in capturing the stance and attitude of the figures portrayed. In The Art of Queena Stovall (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research P, 1987) 53-54.

Figure 57. Illustration of an ornate hawk by Arthur Singer in Birds of the World, © 1961 Western Publishing Company, Inc. Used by permission.

Figure 58. Carving of the ornate hawk inspired by Arthur Singer's illustration. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 59. Illustration of an great horned owl by Arthur Singer in Birds of the World, © 1961 Western Publishing Company, Inc. Used by permission.

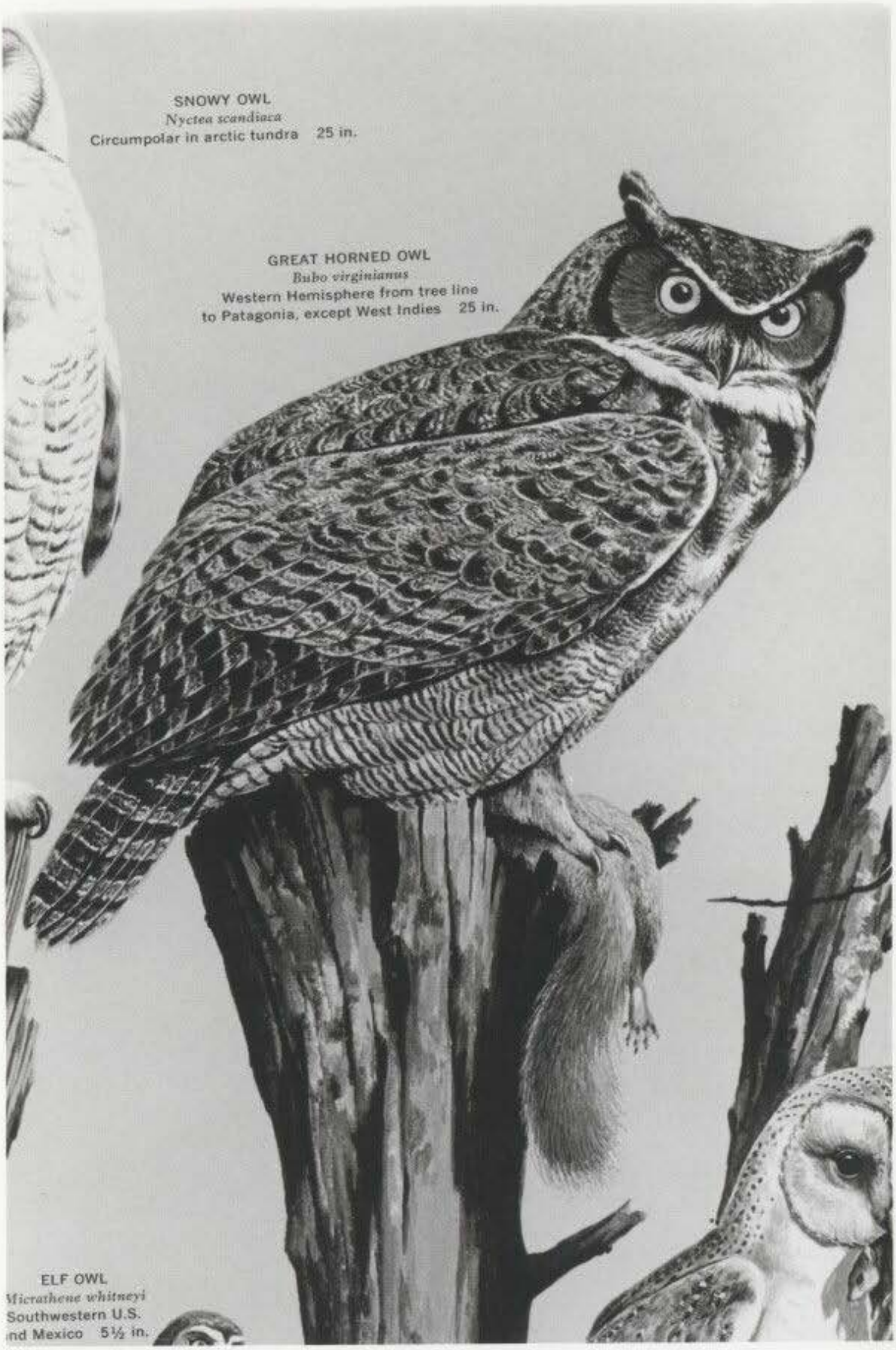
SNOWY OWL
Nyctea scandiaca
Circumpolar in arctic tundra 25 in.
GREAT HORNED OWL
Bubo virginianus
Western Hemisphere from tree line
to Patagonia, except West Indies 25 in.
ELF OWL
Micrathene whitneyi
Southwestern U.S.
nd Mexico 5½ in.

Figure 60. Sketch of the great horned owl from Zergenyi's sketchbook inspired by Singer's illustration.


HORNED
OWL
3. BARHEADED GOOSE
4 EGYPTIAN GOOSE
5. EMPEROR
6. ANDEAN GOOSE
7. WHITEFRONTED

Figure 61. Zergenyi putting the finishing touches of paint on the great horned owl carving. Photographer: Michael Hopiak. Used by permission.

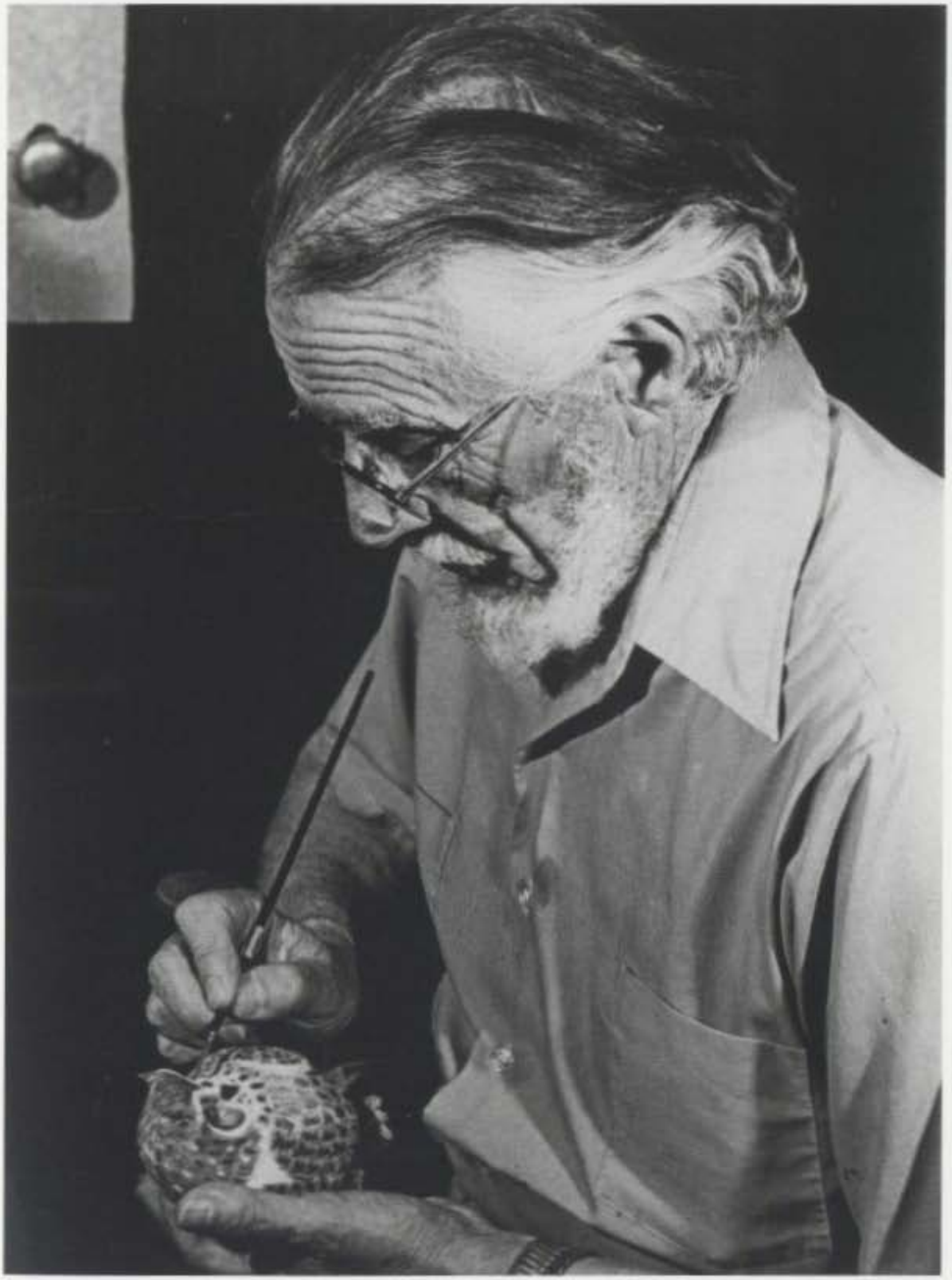

Figure 62. Great horned owl carving.

These ornate bases were inspired by examples of Chinese carvings Zergenyi saw on display in a store window in Ithaca.[65] Later carvings were typically placed on plain wooden bases cut out in various shapes, sometimes with little or no ornamentation aside from a coat of black paint or clear varnish. Recently, while cleaning out a cupboard where some of his earlier carvings were stored, he came across a piece mounted on one of the ornately carved bases and observed that he gave more individual attention to these carvings than he did to the ones placed on simple wooden bases, not because the later carvings mattered less than the earlier ones, but because by that time his attention had shifted from making individual pieces to creating a whole collection.

Pieces from his total repertoire like the prayer book box, the birds carved from the maple branch, the bald eagles, and the wall plaques, for example, all come from specific and identifiable periods in his carving career. Although changes in the style of base provide a rough means of temporally organizing the bird carvings, a precise chronology of the carvings in the collection is impossible. When queried on when something was made Zergenyi typically replied he couldn't remember. When he could recall, his best answer was often a vague approximation. Clearly, time and dates of

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[65]Notes, 31 July 1989, 3; 16 May 1990, 5.

production are not the most salient categories in terms of Zergenyi's organization of his work.[66]

Questions of chronology, style, and technique focus attention on individual pieces in a maker's repertoire and seek to establish connections that take a linear form. Here the researcher attempts to make sense of the work in terms of sequential relationships between the discrete units. Because of the problems in establishing a chronology for the carvings, it is difficult to discuss in any meaningful way relationships between individual pieces in terms of the evolution of style or the refinement in technique. Jones questions the validity of applying the evolutionary model to the analysis of hand made objects, arguing that presumptions about succeseesion of style and development of technique fail to consider other important factors such as personal dilemmas or customer preferences which influence both repertoire composition and object style.[67] His comments are based on his own

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[66]The work of some artists lends itself more easily to this type of analysis than others. Lavern Kelley, a farmer and wood carver from upstate New York, specializes in the carving of farm machinery and vehicles which are easily datable by style and period. In addition, Kelley conceptualizes his work according to a chronological time frame. See Joyce Ice, "Making Connections: The Context of Lavern Kelley's Art," A Rural Life: The Art of Lavern Kelley (Clinton, NY: Hamilton College, 1989) 14-24.

[67]Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker 107-109. Analyses of the work of traditional artists in terms of stylistic development and technique refinement have their roots in the art-historical approach which informed much of the research on traditional arts until the last generation or so. See for example Beatrix T. Rumford, "Uncommon Art of the Common People: A Review of the trends in the Collecting and Exhibiting of American Folk Art," in Quimby and Swank, 13-53. Unlike the art-historical approach which privileged the object, contemporary studies of folk art and material culture favor an ethnographic approach which examines the object in terms of the

attempt to establish a chronology for the work of chairmaker Chester Cornett. He writes:

> I assumed that there was a progression from panel-back to slat-back chairs. . . . For two years I organized his works sequentially on the basis of what I assumed was a steady evolution in style.[68]

Only after further reflection on his questions about changes in designs and a reconsideration of Cornett's responses did Jones come to realize that a design could be made at any time and that his attempts to work out a design chronology did not correspond to Cornett's repertoire selection.[69] Jones's argument against the application of an evolutionary model to the study of Cornett's repertoire is equally applicable to Zergenyi's collection where older designs and techniques, such as chip-carving motifs decorating the edge of round wall-plaques, appear on newer forms. Kenneth Goldstein's model of repertoire performance is a more applicable one as it accounts for the reappearance of older .orms later in an artist's career, as well as for the addition of new forms and techniques throughout.[70] According to Goldstein's model,

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multiple contexts informing its shape and influencing its use.

[68]Jones, Craftsman 130.

[69]Jones, Craftsman 131.

[70]See Kenneth S. Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertory," Toward New Perspectives in Folklore, eds. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman, Publications of the American Folklore Society, v. 23 (Austin: U of Texas P, 1972) 64. Diane Tye uses this model of repertoire analysis in "A Contextual Study of a Newfoundland Folk Artist: Patrick J. Murphy, Bell Island (MA thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1981).

Zergenyi's carving techniques and repertoire composition may be described by permanence (ornithological theme and additive technique) and intermittence (chip carving and subtractive technique).

Another component in Goldstein's schema of repertoire patterning is "transience," which characterizes those forms which are performed for only a limited period in an artist's career after which they become part of the inactive repertory.[71] There are several pieces in Zergenyi's carving repertoire which fall into this category, because they were made once for a special occasion or to mark a particular event. Some were made as gifts for family and friends, others were the result of Zergenyi's experimentation with new forms, and one was motivated by the threat of nuclear war that loomed large in the early days of the Cold War.

Zergenyi made surprisingly few carvings of mammals, given the breadth of his interests in and experience with wildlife in general. He preferred birds to any other subject and when asked why he said teasingly it began with the stork and with a glint in his eye asked, "That's a nice story isn't it?"[72] On other occasions he offered more serious responses such as "Bird carving is not so common. Not everybody does bird carving"[73] and that "six hundred mammals is more difficult to carve."[74] In addition, he

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[71]Goldstein 64.

[72]Notes, 16 May 1990, 5. Another wood carver facetiously accounted for his interest in carving by explaining "his mother was frightened by a woodpecker," in Méras 220.

[73]Notes, 23 June 1989, 2.

argued that there are fewer species of birds and that he had always been interested in them: "As I was walking with my father everyday through the mountains there were birds all over the place and then I started collecting the birds for the museum."[75] He once playfully remarked that as a young man, "Instead of chasing skirts, I was chasing birds."[76]

Although he found mammals more difficult subjects to translate, he has carved some very impressive pieces. One is of a bear with a freshly caught salmon carved from a single piece of wood using the subtractive technique (fig 63), while a more whimsical one is of a nut-eating squirrel forming the centerpiece of a nut bowl (fig 64). For his friend Bob Hughes, an avid big game hunter, he carved an ensemble of mountain goats and one of antelopes, an elephant, and also made a lamp featuring the black, brown, and polar bears (fig 65). Most of these pieces commemorate trophies bagged or places visited on Hughes's frequent hunting expeditions.

One of the most challenging and unusual pieces he made was a totem pole, also for Bob Hughes. While on a hunting trip to Alaska in 1966, the Hughes had hoped to acquire a totem pole as a souvenir and when they failed to do so, Zergenyi decided to make one for them. The totem pole stands approximately six feet high and features in descending order totems of an owl, a wolf, a crow, and a salmon (fig 66).

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[74]Notes, 18 May 1990, 6.

[75]Notes, 18 May 1990, 6.

[76]Notes, 18 May 1990, 6.

Figure 63. Bear with salmon carved from a single piece of wood.

Figure 64. Nut-eating squirrel. (The bowl was not made by Zergenyi.) Given to his daughter Maria.

Figure 65. A selection of carvings Zergenyi gave to Bob Hughes. All the pieces featured here were made by Zergenyi with the exception of the woodduck and bear on the second shelf.

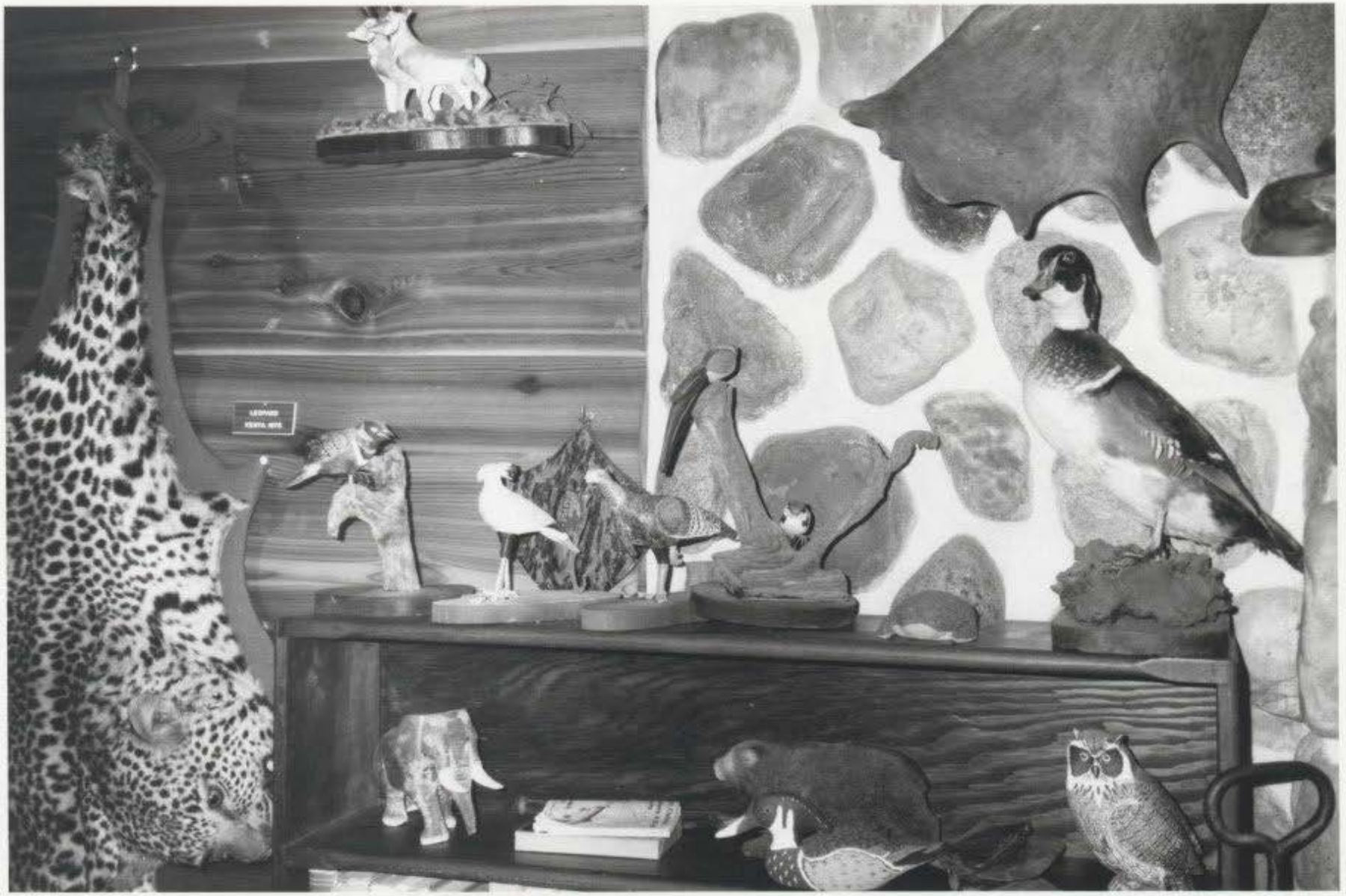

Figure 66. Totem pole made for Mr. and Mrs. Hughes. The pole stands over six feet high.


Alaska
here We
Come!

The totems were carved directly into the trunk of the tree, except for the wings of the owl which were carved from separate pieces of wood and subsequently attached.

One other carving of Zergenyi's worthy of note here is a piece he made as a commentary on the threat of nuclear war. The carving depicts a group of vultures sitting on a blackened and twisted tree leering down at the human skulls and bones scattered on the ground below (fig 67). The crumbled remains of a building completes the assemblage. Zergenyi called the piece "Atomic Age" and gave it to his physician, Dr. John Ferger, in recognition of Ferger's involvement in the anti-nuclear movement. Dr. Ferger recalled receiving the piece around 1960 when he was chairman of a locally organized group called Voters for Peaceful Alternatives. While Ferger knew that Zergenyi carved, he was quite surprised to receive the "Atomic Age" and said in retrospect he didn't realize Zergenyi "had any political interests or political motivations in his carving."[77] Although few others of his carvings would provide such explicit political commentary, much of his work was in fact motivated by strong political feelings--a subject I will return to later in the thesis.

Searching for patterns in an artist's repertoire focuses attention on relationships between forms in the case of the evolutionary model and on performance histories in the case of the active/inactive paradigm. Isolating those patterns does not, however, fully capture the performer's thoughts and attitudes toward the repertoire. As noted above, Jones dismissed the evolutionary model partially because it failed to adequately

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[77]John Ferger, personal interview, 27 July 1990.

Figure 67. Anti-nuclear piece entitled "Atomic Age" made for John Ferger.


ATOMIC ACE

account for the influence of the performer's relationship to the forms being created. In his study of Almeda Riddle, Roger Abrahams found that she weighted items in her repertoire differentially.[78] Whether or not an item is performed and the significance it holds for the performer is contingent on a number of variables including the performer's personal history and associations, interests, capabilities, and aesthetics.

There are certain forms in Zergenyi's repertoire which hold much more personal meaning for him than others. Foremost among these is the woodcock. He described his experience of hunting the woodcock in his native Hungary as "mostly emotional hunting" and years later, after settling in upstate New York, he said of his participation in hunting, "I was interested only in woodcocks. This [Freeville, NY] was a good place for woodcocks."[79] A passage in Patrick Leigh Fermor's account of his travels through Hungary in the 1930s suggests Zergenyi was not alone in his strong feelings for the woodcock. Fermor had been welcomed into the home of Count Lajos, a contemporary of Zergenyi's, whom he described as a man who "loved birds and had a way with them."[80] At the time the Count was tenderly caring for two rare great bustards whose wings had been clipped by a local farmer and Fermor watched as

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[78]Roger Abrahams, ed, A Singer and Her Songs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1970) and also Abrahams, "Creativity."

[79]Notes, 16 May 1990, 2.

[80]Patrick Leigh Fermor, Between the Woods and the Water (1986; London: Penguin Books, 1988) 73.

the larger of these timid birds allowed the Count to scratch his head. Years later Fermor recalled the evening they had spent together:

> At dinner he talked of the spring and autumn migrations of cranes and wild geese. . . . I knew he was an excellent shot. He had been talking about woodcock, and when I thought he had finished, he said, very slowly, "Their Latin name is *Scolopax*." A long pause followed; then he said, "*rusticola*", and finally after an even longer pause, he added another "*rusticola*" as a trance-like afterthought.[81]

And it was the carvings of the woodcock along with those of the capercaillie--birds he had especially enjoyed hunting at home in Hungary--which helped most to alleviate the "very bad homesickness" Zergenyi often experienced. He has carved many examples of both the European and the American woodcock; some became part of the collection, others were sold or given away. In addition to the woodcocks Zergenyi has himself, his daughter Maria has three and friends or former colleagues Ted Bingham, John King, John Ferger, and Dr. Hamilton each have one.[82]

There are other pieces in the collection which also hold great significance for Zergenyi--a significance that can not necessarily be accounted for in terms of numbers of times performed. The red crossbill is one such example. While only one version of the carving exists to my knowledge, it is a piece which conjures up many memories of his former life and the struggles faced as he and his family attempted to make sense out of their lives following their emigration from Hungary. The point here is not so

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[81]Fermor 73.

[82]This survey is not meant to be exhaustive, only representative of the number of woodcocks made and distributed.

much to create a hierarchy of meaning, as it is to suggest the importance of considering the performer's personal relationship to the items in his or her repertoire in any discussion which attempts to isolate patterns of performance.

In this chapter I examined the carving techniques employed by Zergenyi including chip carving, and the subtractive and additive processes; stylistic influences on his work; and the composition of his repertoire. Moving from production to organization, the next chapter discusses the ideas and intentions behind the creation of the collection of bird carvings and the principles informing the arrangement of its constituent parts. I then compare this collection to a collection of hunting trophies assembled by Zergenyi during the years he lived in Hungary. Also explored here are the intellectual and cultural precedents for collecting in general and for Zergenyi's work specifically.

CHAPTER FIVE

CREATING THE COLLECTION

Studies examining the design and manufacture of handmade objects have dominated the field of material culture. More recently, however, folklorists (along with other cultural researchers) have begun to give serious consideration to the use of objects--both those that are hand crafted as well as those which are mass produced.[1] In these studies, the attention shifts from the creator to the consumer, from considerations of how something is made to how something is used and how this use is informed by and concomitantly informs traditional beliefs, aesthetics, and patterns of behavior. As one material culture scholar contends, "How an object is used. . . may become more important for the folklorist than how it was actually made."[2] Thus, the

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[1]Henry Glassie summarizes past orientations and discusses future directions for material culture studies in "Studying Material Culture Today," Living in a Material World, ed. Gerald L. Pocius (St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1991) 253-266.

[2]Gerald L. Pocius, "Holy Pictures in Newfoundland Houses: Visual Codes for Secular and Supernatural Relationships," Media Sense, eds. Peter Narváez and Martin Laba (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1986) 124. In A Place to Belong (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1991), Pocius makes this point even more compellingly. See, for example, his discussion of house types, 197-226. Many of the essays in Simon J. Bronner, ed., Consuming Visions (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1989) explore the cultural meanings of object use.

traditional emphasis on artifacts created by a particular mode of production (handmade) has been revised to include investigations of how objects are used (regardless of how they are made) and in doing so has provided "a valuable corrective to material culture studies."[3] Henry Glassie argues, however, that use becomes meaningful only when it functions to transform or creatively remake the object to reflect the user's intentions, not the maker's. In other words, "use becomes creation when objects become parts of objects, when the context becomes composition."[4] Interest in the use of objects has stimulated some very interesting work in the field of artifact research; particularly pertinent to this discussion are the recent studies on collectors and collections.[5]

One of the most influential commentaries on the nature and function of collections is provided by Susan Stewart. She describes the collection as:

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[3]Glassie 265.

[4]Glassie 264.

[5]Brenda Danet and Tamar Katriel provide a brief cross-disciplinary review of this research in "No Two Alike: Play and Aesthetics in Collecting," Play & Culture 2 (1989):254-255. In addition to Danet and Katriel, other work influencing my thinking on this subject include James Clifford, "Objects and Selves--An Afterword," in Stocking 236-246; idem, "On Collecting Art and Culture," The Predicament of Culture Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 215-251; Mihalyi Csikzentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, The Meaning of Things (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review," in Oring, A Reader, 329-338; and especially Susan Stewart, On Longing (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1984).

> a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context. Like other forms of art, its function is not the restoration of context of origin but rather the creation of a new context, a context standing in a metaphorical, rather than contiguous, relation to the world of everyday life. . . . The collection presents a hermetic world . . . a world which is both full and singular, which has banished repetition and achieved authority.[6]

Similarly, Brenda Danet and Tamar Katriel describe the act of collecting as a form of play where the individual is given license to "develop an idiosyncratic symbolic world."[7] Locating collections and collecting within the context of play is somewhat beguiling, because it belies the seriousness of the endeavor. As researchers have noted this form of play is deeply concerned with issues of control, authority, predictability, meaning, and identity.[8]

Understanding collectors and interpreting collections takes into consideration issues central to folkloristic study such as context, creativity, identity, values, and aesthetics. Collections are highly ordered, rule-governed systems of objects that create, as Stewart and others have argued, a bounded world. The collection achieves this objective through the recontextualization and redefinition of artifacts within new

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[6]Stewart 151-152.

[7]Danet and Katriel 255.

[8]Danet and Katriel suggest additional functions including, among others, status, security, closure, accomplishment, and investment. Mary Zwolinski discusses the relationship between collectors and their collections in "Displays of Culture: Personal Museums in Wisconsin," M.A. thesis, Western Kentucky U, 1988.

"systems of value and meaning"[9]--systems composed and imposed by the needs and desires of the collector. Danet and Katriel discuss this phenomenon primarily within the context of individuals, while James Clifford examines it at an institutional level where he demonstrates that museums participate in the very same processes of acquisition and recontextualization as do individuals.[10] In addition to institutional participation in collecting, Clifford discusses institutionalized forms of collecting such as that undertaken by anthropologists and other cultural researchers. Here, the ultimate goal of the collector is the construction of culture through the acquisition of stories, customs, objects, and beliefs. In fact, Clifford describes cultures as "ethnographic collections."[11] Seeing ethnography "as a form of culture collecting," he contends, "highlights the ways that diverse experiences and facts are selected, gathered, detached from their original temporal occasions, and given enduring value in new arrangements."[12] As Clifford points out, the same principles and objectives informing the collection of artifacts are operating in the collection of culture. And

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[9]Clifford 237.

[10]Stewart sees the museum as the central metaphor of the collection because both strive "for authenticity and for closure of all space and temporality with the context at hand," 161.

[11]Clifford, "On Collecting" 230.

[12]Clifford, "On Collecting" 231. Creating collections and examining the interrelationships of their constituent forms preoccupied folkloristic scholarship well into the twentieth century as Alan Dundes describes in "On the Psychology of Collecting Folklore," Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin 28 (1962): 65-74.

like many collectors, we, as scholars in pursuit of knowledge, achieve a comfortable distance from the implications of our activities precisely through our efforts to locate them within pedagogical frames.

Few of the objects in the collections discussed are made by the individual collectors. Instead, they are found, purchased, gathered together, each piece selected according to an overriding principle of organization and intent. The collection coheres based on this principle and not necessarily on the interrelationships of the objects themselves. Zergenyi's collection, however, is distinguished by the fact that he is both maker and collector. He not only crafted the objects out of natural materials, he also created the collection out of the artifacts shaped by his own hand. As such, this collection consists of a complex layering of actions, intentions, and contexts. In this chapter, I will begin to explore the implications of Zergenyi's dual role as both maker and collector as I describe his decision to create a study collection and explore the principles that guided its organization. I also examine precedents for the collection and discuss the broader intellectual and cultural milieux which helped to shape his ideas about collecting and collections in general.

Working at Cornell University's Agricultural College, Zergenyi frequently had the opportunity to view a collection of preserved ornithological specimens from different regions of the world on display in one of the college's buildings. While he was pleased to see such a display--a type familiar to him both as a collector for and visitor to natural history museums--this one, much to his chagrin, was in very poor

condition. Most of the artifacts had been ravaged by time and insects and were substantially deteriorated. Based on his own learning experiences, Zergenyi strongly advocated the pedagogical value of being able to see in the flesh, so to speak, the specimens one was studying and, as a result, resolved to replace the collection of disintegrating stuffed birds with ones he had carved. He was carving anyway and the collection could be replaced much more readily and economically with carved birds than with preserved ones. In fact, he argued, with carving he could produce examples of species unobtainable from the taxidermist, thus enlarging the collection and enhancing its pedagogical value. Further to this point, he reasoned carvings would have a distinct advantage over the stuffed birds because the very nature of the carvings lent themselves to the kind of close inspection the specimens on display behind glass did not. Zergenyi felt that the opportunity to handle and examine various species--or in this case carved renditions of them--would spark the curiosity and stimulate the interests of the students in the same way it did when he was a young man learning about ornithology, and collecting birds for museums and zoos in Hungary.[13] He broached the idea with his friend, Cornell professor Dr. William Hamilton. Hamilton's grandson was interested in carving and the two visited Zergenyi on his

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[13]Stewart Culin, former businessman turned museum curator, shared Zergenyi's ideas about the role of objects in education. In a public address given in the late nineteenth century to a group of art teachers in New York he stated, "How useful would be a museum where people could touch things, as they now see them." See Simon J. Bronner, "Object Lessons: The Work of Ethnological Museums and Collections," in Bronner, Consuming Visions 232.

farm in Freeville where they had an opportunity to view some of his carvings. The professor, well aware of Zergenyi's knowledge of game and his experiences as a hunter, had often encouraged him to give a public lecture on the topic. "Dr. Hamilton always wanted I should give a lecture in this big, big auditorium on huntings," he said, but he never accepted the invitation. "It's not my nature," he said.[14] Although at the time (late 1950s) the number of carvings viewed by Hamilton was comparatively small, he was nonetheless impressed with what he saw and heartily supported the plan to replace the stuffed birds with carved ones.

Although this "study collection," as Zergenyi called it, would consist of artfully constructed forms instead of ones captured in the wild, they were nonetheless intended not as objects of contemplation, but as objects of instrumentation.[15] He did not see himself as an artist creating aesthetically pleasing forms, but as a scientist producing functional models. That the carvings were not to scale nor exact depictions of the species did not detract, in Zergenyi's mind, from their usefulness as educational aids. "They are not accurate," he said, "but if you see these birds you can know [them]. Accurate is only a photo picture. That is accurate. Nothing else."[16] Thinking about the issue of accuracy he was reminded of his experiences hunting capercaillie. His gamekeeper would always count the tail feathers of his captured prey to see if all

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[14]Notes, 16 July 1991, 1.

[15]Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 96.

[16]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

sixteen were there. "I always had sixteen feathers," he said. "This is accurate. Nothing else is accurate."[17] He acknowledges that his carvings would have been more accurate if he had worked directly from skins instead of from pictures in bird books, but he asserts his objective was only so "you could recognize it. This [carving] is only to recognize it, to teach students."[18] A small white sticker attached to the bottom of each carving identifying it by its common and Latin name, geographic location, and average size (fig 68) is evidence of his intention that this collection be used for instructional purposes.

Zergenyi recalled he began wanting "to make a little collection--fifty or sixty interesting birds," but "it kept growing and growing."[19] His daughter Maria commented he was more concerned with the content of the collection than its actual size:

> He did not think in terms of numbers when he started carving. [He] wanted to do a few interesting birds which had unusual characteristics or habits, such as the honeyguide, galapagos finch, etc. Then he did some of his favorite birds from home: ice bird, upupa, etc. . . . The large collection evolved from this unplanned beginning.[20]

Some of the more interesting species of birds Zergenyi included in the collection were the great hornbill (see fig 25), and the satin bowerbird which he

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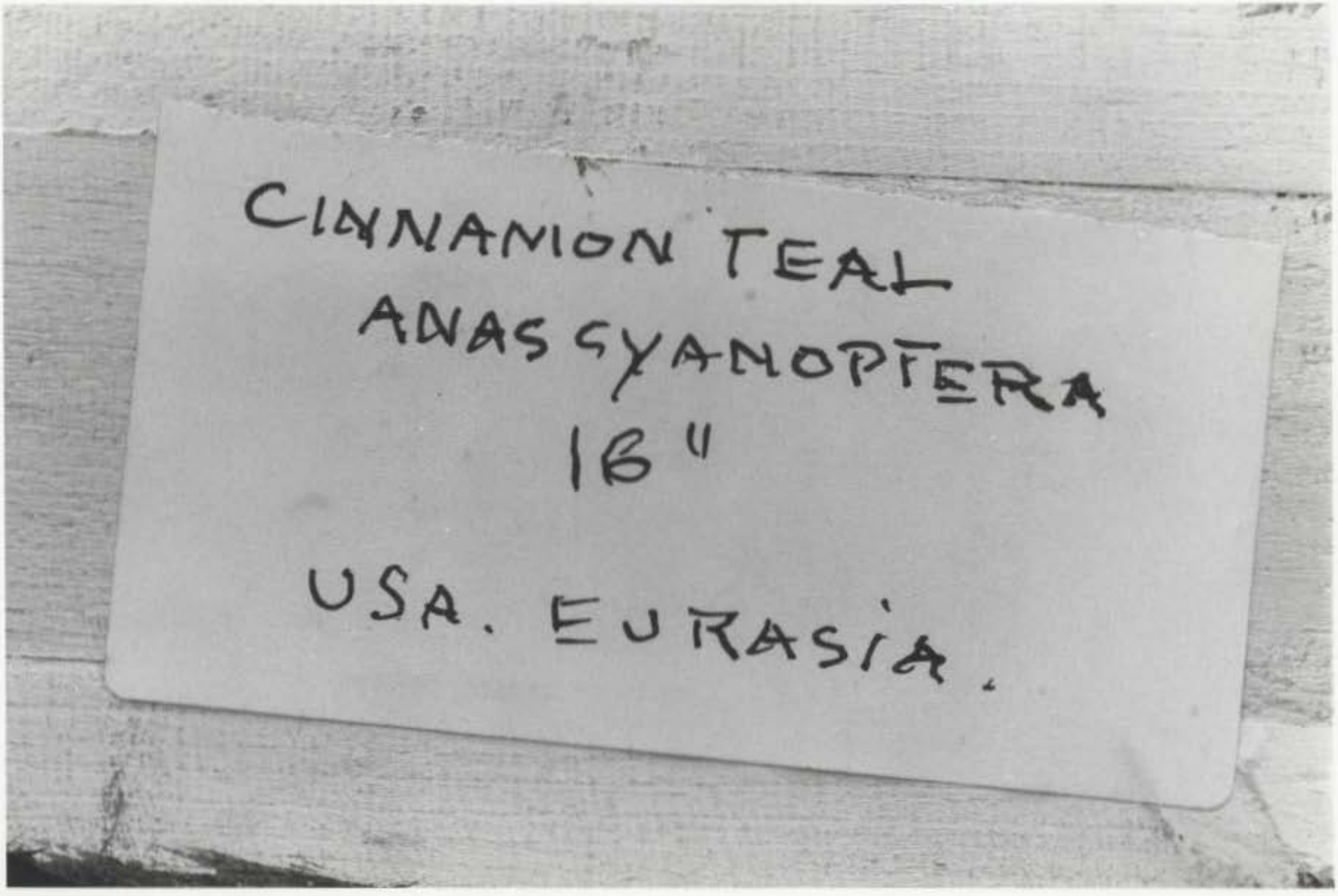
[17]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

[18]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

[19]Notes, 21 June 1989, 2.

[20]Maria Doolittle, letter to the author, March 1990.

Figure 68. Zergenyi attached a white sticker to the bottom of each carving identifying it by common name, Latin name, average size, and geographic region.


CINNAMON TEAL
ANAS CYANOPTERA
16"
USA. EURASIA.

considers "a very special bird" because "the male brings presents for the female."[21] And the Australian mallee fowl's (fig 69) habit of fashioning a kind of natural incubator out of leaves and earth for its egg was declared by Zergenyi "the most interesting thing I know about birds," thus earning this otherwise indistinct looking bird a place in the collection.[22]

For Zergenyi, while the mallee fowl's nesting habits may be the most interesting thing he knows about birds, he acknowledges "every bird is interesting in some ways. . . . Not for everybody," he added, "but for me."[23] Thus, the collection grew to include not only birds with unique characteristics, but also examples of more common species such as the kiwi bird from New Zealand, the roadrunner from the United States (fig 70), the European kingfisher (fig 71) and the masked African lovebirds (fig 72). Nor was the collection limited to extant species. Zergenyi carved several examples of extinct species including the dodo bird, the passenger pigeon, the great auk (fig 73) and the moa and elephant bird (fig 74). Striving to produce a collection that was representative of both the diversity of bird species and their distribution geographically, Zergenyi quickly surpassed his initial objective of fifty or sixty carvings and in the end produced a collection numbering in the hundreds.

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[21]Notes, 28 June 1989, 2.

[22]Notes, 28 June 1989, 3.

[23]Notes, 28 June 1989, 3.

Figure 69. Mallee fowl, a bird which creates a type of incubator in which to nest its eggs.

Figure 70. Road runner. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 71. European kingfisher. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 72. Masked African lovebirds. Given to the author. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 73. Great auk. Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

Figure 74. Elephant bird (R) and Moa (L). Photographer: Carl Koski, courtesy of The DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca, NY.

My attempts to determine exactly when he decided to make the collection and which birds came first were no more successful than earlier efforts to determine a chronology for individual pieces. On one occasion he responded to my question on the evolution of the collection: "It just sort of happened that way," and smiled bemusedly at my seemingly endless desire to situate actions in time as if that would somehow make them all the more comprehensible. While not being able to say exactly *when* he decided to begin the collection, he could, in retrospect, name a combination of factors as to *why* he began, including cataract surgery which affected his eyesight and made it difficult for him to hunt, the sale of his small brood of chickens and his retirement from Cornell a few years later which left him with ample free time, the deteriorating stuffed birds at Cornell, and the fact that he was carving anyway. "I was carving always," he said. "I don't know why. You see I have to do something with my hands. I could get crazy doing nothing."[24]

Although the content of the collection evolved rather unsystematically, such was not the case with its organization. As the collection grew from a selection of the carver's favorite birds and ones with unusual characteristics to include a broader range of species, some of them known to Zergenyi only through ornithological publications, he began to systematize their organization according to geographic region. The collection is divided into seven geographic regions and representatives from each region are grouped together. He kept a careful record of all the species carved noting

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[24]Notes, 16 July 1991, 2.

both their common and Latin names, and this catalogue, like the collection it documents, is organized by region. Some regions, like North and South America and Europe are better represented than others like Australia and New Zealand based simply on the fact that Zergenyi was more familiar with birds from the former locales.

Zergenyi's desire to make a study collection and the method by which he chose to organize it were certainly influenced by his own experiences as a student and as a collector of specimens for zoos and museums in his native Hungary. He understood collecting as an intellectual and scientific endeavor and appreciated the usefulness of collections as a mode of instruction. His ideas on the subject were likely shaped not only by personal experience, but also by the intellectual climate of the cultural and scientific worlds of late nineteenth century Europe.

Collecting had long been a pastime of the upper classes[25] who gathered into personal and private collections flora and fauna, archaeological remains, and ethnographic artifacts from various, often exotic, places.[26] These collections, or "cabinets of curiosity" as they became known in the sixteenth century, contained

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[25]Those with more moderate means were also collectors, although on a more modest scale as Guiseppe Olmi points out in his discussion of sixteenth and seventeenth century Italian cabinets of curiosities. In "Science--Honour--Metaphor: Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in The Origins of Museums, eds. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1985) 5-16.

[26]See, for example, Edward P. Alexander, Museums in Motion (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979) 8; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, "The Museum in the Disciplinary Society," in Pearce 64-66; and Impey and MacGregor 1-4.

natural and ethnographic materials in contrast to galleries where art and larger sculptural forms were displayed. Susan Pearce writes,

> the guiding principle behind most of these collections was "high quality." The accumulation was in no sense systematic, but involved the choice of "good" pieces which were considered to embody the finest design and craftsmanship of their time.[27]

There was an undeniable prestige associated with the acquisition and display of exotic artifacts that made collecting them a fashionable pursuit; however, the collectors located their primary function in the enhancement of scientific and artistic knowledge. While a good measure of ethnographic voyeurism along with a healthy dose of materialism cannot be denied or dismissed as insignificant to the collecting impulse, an abiding interest of the collectors appears to have been the desire to gain an understanding of the complexities of nature and culture through the collection, classification, and *study* of the objects of both. The pedagogical frame in which collecting activities were undertaken and justified, however, could easily obscure the less edifying, but nonetheless existing need for possession and ultimately *control* inherent in collecting. The collection provided a means to this end for it artificially created a spatially and temporally bounded universe that came to represent an otherwise incomprehensible totality. As Stewart notes, "One cannot know everything about the world, but one can at least approach closed knowledge through the

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[27]Susan Pearce, "Museum Studies in Material Culture: Introduction," in Pearce, Museum Studies 3. See as well Clifford, "On Collecting" 218-220.

collection."[28] Order was not only sought in the classification of tangible objects, but also in the world created or represented by them.

In these cabinets of curiosity, natural and cultural artifacts were often intermingled and images of some of the earlier collections suggest principles of organization based on shape and form, rather than on any inherent or systematic relations between the items featured.[29] In some cases the very placement of the objects on the walls and suspended from the ceilings could hardly have encouraged the kind of inspection and investigation for which these collections were ostensibly assembled. While the organization of the collection was partially dependent on factors such as the size and character of the objects included, the structure of the space in which it was housed, and the temperament of the collector, many of the larger collections were broadly organized according to conventions popular at the time. One mode of organization popular in the nineteenth century was the geographic where objects from the same region were grouped together, regardless of type or form. The collection of Sir Hans Sloane, which formed the basis for the British Museum, was organized according to the original geographical location of the artifacts as were many other important collections on the continent.[30] In the mid-nineteenth century, the

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[28]Stewart 161. Also Clifford, "On Collecting" 218.

[29]For example, see illustrations 1, 4, 10, 49, and 51 in Impey and MacGregor.

[30]William Ryan Chapman, "Arranging Ethnology: A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition," in Stocking 23-24.

typological system of organizing collections became very popular and began to replace the geographical one. Among its proponents was the well-known and highly dedicated collector, A.H.L.F. Pitt-Rivers.

By mid century Darwin had published The Origin of Species and he, and his fellow evolutionists, were busy creating typologies and developing systems of relations between sets of things. This desire to understand the world in evolutionary terms was not limited to the natural sciences, but was adopted by those in the social sciences like Edward B. Tylor who proposed a theory of "survivals" to account for the continued existence of certain expressive behaviors among "civilized" people. Pitt-Rivers, like Tylor, considered the educational merits of the typological system superior to those of the geographical one and organized his extensive collection accordingly. He, and other supporters of the typological system, argued that a comparative analysis of similar forms from different regions could reveal much about the people who made and used the various artifacts.[31] By the end of the century, however, anthropologists like Franz Boas were calling for a return to presentations that grouped artifacts according to context rather than type and arranged them according to relational and functional criteria rather than formal.

Being a visitor of museums as well as a contributor to their collections of fauna, Zergenyi was likely exposed to a variety of organizational systems. Stewart

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[31]For an illustration of this method of organization, see Ira Jacknis, "Franz Boas and Exhibits: On the Limitations of the Museum Method of Anthropology," in Stocking 78.

contends the collector's system of organizing objects becomes significant in understanding the nature of the collection and ultimately, the collector. She writes, "To ask which principles of organization are used in articulating the collection is to begin to discern what the collection is about."[32] Zergenyi chose to organize his collection according to geographic location because he said this was the "natural way," the most logical system to order the species represented. He cited several reasons in support of his choice. One was his own interest in world geography and his own desire to know not only what something is, but also where it came from. Zergenyi's abiding interest in geography was observed by John Ferger, his former physician.

> Andrew read tremendously and I think he memorized every National Geographic in the last fifty years, plus many, many books. He was amazingly well-versed in all kinds of history, and geography and culture. And when I would travel some place, I would tell him where I was going and he'd quiz me about it afterwards. . . he really knew a tremendous amount about many, many places. And when I went to Tibet, again he knew placenames and a lot about the culture and he asked about places I'd been and what I'd seen.[33]

In addition to his personal interest in geography, Zergenyi noted that many bird books group species by geographic region and in doing so promote the significance of the relationship of forms to their natural contexts. Another reason he offered is that "if the amateur ornithologist goes to a foreign continent, he should recognize the birds that he saw grouped together."[34] While Zergenyi offers a rationale for his

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[32]Stewart 154.

[33]John Ferger, personal interview, 27 July 1990.

[34]Maria Doolittle, letter to the author, March 1990.

organizational scheme based primarily in science and nature, I would offer that the geographic system appealed to him on another, more personal--perhaps unconscious--level. Geography is primarily concerned with place and with the relationship of forms to locales. Although I am only speculating, given Zergenyi's status as a displaced person, his creation of a collection of carvings organized according to region, where much attention was devoted to the placement of species in their particular niches, may have helped him to confront his own feelings of placelessness. Although he felt a sense of frustration and often despair with the displacement and disorder in his own life, he was able to create place and impose order in the "lives" of these inanimate forms--an undertaking he must have found quite consoling and even stabilizing. Thus, carving the forms and creating the collection functioned as Stewart and others claimed they should to provide Zergenyi with control over a world he himself defined and composed.

While he organized the collection according to geographic region, when it came to individual pieces the overriding concern was presenting the birds in their particular ecological niches (fig 75). His objective was to create "a natural background for the displays--such as they use in museums."[35] Zergenyi was quite enterprising and imaginative in the materials he used to create these natural contexts. Old stump fences surrounding nearby fields and pastures long since abandoned were a good source of mounts and stands for the carvings. "I enjoyed to collect these

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[35]Doolittle, letter, March 1990.

Figure 75. Aninghas depicted in their natural context.

woods," he recalled. "As I came home from Cornell, I went into the woods."[36] With a knapsack on his back and a saw in his hand he gathered up gnarled branches and roots, along with abandoned bird nests, weeds, and grasses for use in creating the settings in which the carvings were placed. In addition, both natural and artificial materials were artfully reworked in Zergenyi's attempts to set the birds in context. Carving and painting transformed raw wood into cactus, nests (fig 76), cattails, and marsh grass (fig 77). Green shag carpeting became a grassy meadow (fig 78) and styrofoam painted brown the furrows of a newly plowed field (fig 79). The contexts not only imparted a vitality to the carvings, they also enhanced their pedagogical value.

In addition to the mutual influences of the intellectual and cultural climate in which he matured, and his early educational experiences both in and outside the classroom, Zergenyi's decision to create a study collection must also have been influenced by his personal inclination toward collecting in the first place. He had a long history of collecting ranging from special guns to specimens for museums and zoos to a wide assortment of books on hunting. He also had a large trophy collection, which he kept on display in the game room in his home in Galanta, Hungary. Framed by dark wainscoting were hundreds of trophies (fig 80), the majority of them conventionally displayed with the antlers and skull stripped of fur and flesh (fig 81). There were trophies from stags, ibex, boars, roebucks (these alone numbered

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[36]Notes, 27 July 1989, 1.

Figure 76. Barn swallow feeding her young.

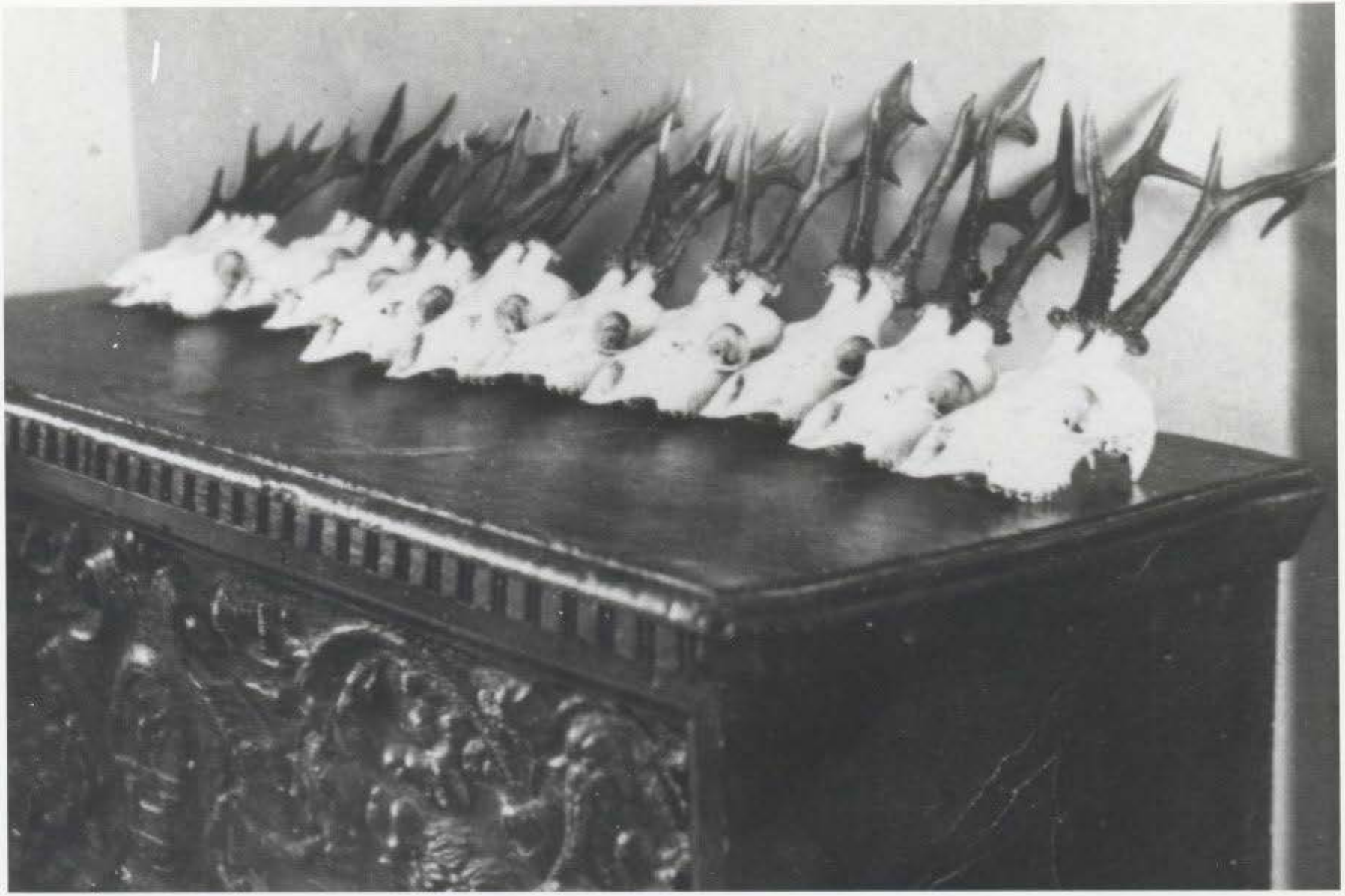
Figure 77. Water fowl scene showing use of painted wood depicting water and marsh grass.

Figure 78. Great bustard bird standing in a field of grass made from a piece of green shag carpeting.

Figure 79. Cut and painted styrofoam form the furrows in a newly plowed field in which stands a stone curlew.

Figure 80. The game room in Zergenyi's home in Galanta, Hungary, c. 1943. Photographer unknown.

Figure 81. A row of roebuck antlers in Zergenyi's game room. He estimates he had over two hundred roebuck trophies alone on display.



somewhere around two hundred), and capercaillies to name only a few.[37] On the wall directly above the central fireplace was a great bustard bird, of which Zergenyi only ever shot two (fig 82). A particularly favored trophy of a peregrine falcon with a Hungarian partridge in its talons was mounted on the wall amidst an array of skulls and antlers. Pride resonated in Zergenyi's voice as he recalled the thrill of bagging the falcon at the same moment as it had captured its own prey. The trophy stood as a symbol of the hunter's skilfullness. Pride, however, quickly dissolved into bitterness and despair as he lingered in his remembrance and when he spoke, the source of his resentment became evident. "The Russians have that now," he said.[38] At the time, the statement seemed incongruous to me, a topical and tonal shift which took me somewhat by surprise. But it has since become the rule rather than the exception for our conversations to take this abrupt turn as long simmering feelings of resentment, sometimes close to the surface, are sparked by the many, and often unpredictable, reminders of things left behind, lost, or stolen.

Clear connections exist between the trophy and carving collections. Both derive from similar impulses and attitudes toward the natural world and both

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[37]In A Time of Gifts (London: John Murray, 1977), Patrick Leigh Fermor describes an Austrian manor house he visited in the early 1930s which featured a similar profusion of trophies: "There are elk's horns from the frontiers of Poland and Lithuania, bears from the Carpathians, the tushes of wild boars twisting up like moustaches, chamois from the Tyrol and bustards, capercalzies (sic) and blackcock; along every available inch of the passages, the twin prongs of roe deer, calligraphically inscribed with a faded date and the venue, multiply forever," 124.

[38]Notes, 27 July 1989, 3.

Figure 82. Zergenyi with two great bustard birds. Tiszafüred, Hungary, 1937. Photographer unknown.

collections came into being through the successful application of similar skills applied in different contexts. The collections differ, however, in several ways, including the nature of their organization, their form of presentation, and in the collector's disposition toward them. While the collection of carvings is organized by geographic region, the collection of trophies appears to have been organized along typological and aesthetic lines.[39] More striking than organization, however, is the mode of presentation and it is here where one can begin to discern more fundamental differences. If, as one folklorist observed, "cultural attitudes toward nature" are articulated in the transformation of natural materials into cultural artifacts, what can be said of the manner in which the forms in the two collections are presented?[40]

Looking first at the trophy collection, the fleshless skulls, which bear little resemblance to the animals from whence they derive, are disturbingly stark and lifeless, although nonetheless compelling. The teeth, tusks, and antlers that were feared in the wild have been subdued and transformed by the hunter's prowess; no longer dangerous and threatening, these "trophies" are safely displayed for public admiration and personal affirmation. The transformation from animal to trophy is achieved by containing nature, by robbing it of its inherent *naturalness*, by redefining

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[39]I am basing my discussion of the trophy room primarily on descriptive details recalled by Zergenyi and on photographs.

[40]Henry Glassie, "The Folkloristic Study of the Artifact," in Dorson, The Handbook 379.

it in terms of culture.[41] Trophies are the captive made captivating. Writing about trophy rooms like Zergenyi's, John Mackenzie contends, "...hunting prowess, social status and 'manly' pursuits, together with an intelligent interest in natural history, were all symbolically captured in this form of interior decoration."[42]

Where the trophies are characterized by an un-naturalness, the carvings feature an imbued naturalness achieved by placing whole forms in natural contexts. They are characterized by a v''lity absent in the trophies precisely because they depict birds in the process of living: capturing prey, attracting mates, caring for their young. While the trophies are examples of nature made culture, the carvings represent the reworking of cultural materials to resemble nature: styrofoam painted to look like furrows of a field, green shag carpeting imitating grass, and wood carved and painted to resemble vegetation. In contrast to the trophies, the carvings are replete with context, standing wholly for themselves.

Returning to the earlier discussion on the functions of collecting and collections as outlined by Stewart and others, we can begin to examine Zergenyi's relationship to these two collections. The trophy room with its display of successful hunts repeatedly confirmed Zergenyi's identity as a skilful hunter and concomitantly his sense of

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[41]Likewise, zoos, another type of controlled participation in nature, transform animals into objects, although they do so in a way that maintains a tension between control and chaos by safely displaying live specimens in contained and monitored spaces.

[42]John MacKenzie, The Empire of Nature (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988) 30.

mastery in the natural world, a world made up of the places where he felt a sense of familiarity, of belonging, and importantly a sense of control. And in the social world of home, a world where he felt less at ease, he surrounded himself with objects redolent of nature. In this sense the trophies are like souvenirs, those artifacts which come to stand for lived experience in a part/whole relationship. Aldo Leopold contends the trophy is a "certificate" because it

> attests that its owner has been somewhere and done something--that he has exercised skill, persistence, or discrimination in the age-old feat of overcoming, outwitting, or reducing-to-possession.[43]

Trophies, like souvenirs, function referentially by capturing and conjuring previous experiences. By physically embodying and carrying the past into the present, they function as a means of reliving significant experiences, if only in one's memory. Writing on the function of souvenirs, Stewart contends that through them "external experience is internalized. The beast is taken home."[44]

The past is also crucially linked to the carving collection, but not in same terms as the souvenir. The carvings are potent distillations of Zergenyi's extensive knowledge and experiences as an amateur ornithologist and as such the collection

> does not displace attention to the past; rather the past is at the service of the collection, for whereas the souvenir lends authenticity to the past, the past lends authenticity to the collection.[45]

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[43]Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac (New York: Oxford UP, 1949) 169.

[44]Stewart 134.

[45]Stewart 151.

It is this very knowledge and experience which legitimated his role as both maker of the carvings and composer of the collection.

The nature of Zergenyi's emotional involvement with the two collections is worthy of note as it underscores how each functioned in terms of asserting authority and achieving order. Zergenyi did not compose the collection of carvings with the same expectations or intentions as he did the collection of trophies, and as a result he related to them very differently. The trophy collection stood as testimony to his skilfullness as a hunter and affirmed his sense of mastery and control in the spaces where he moved "like the swallow." As such, the trophies were highly valued possessions and he clearly found them a source of pleasure and personal satisfaction. The game room was his domain, his "inner sanctum": "Always I was sitting in there, he said."[46] It was a space which mediated both physically and symbolically between nature and culture, between the instincts of the hunter and those of the animals he pursued, and, perhaps most importantly, between his conception of self as both autonomous and dependent.

By contrast, Zergenyi's attitude toward the collection of carvings could best be described as ambivalent. When I asked which carvings he is most proud of, he responded with laughter, presumably struck by the absurdity of my question. "I am

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[46]Notes, 7 January 1992, 2. In The Meaning of Things (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton examine the symbolism of the home. See especially their comments on the "inner sanctum" and the meaning of special objects, 135-145.

not proud of any. Proud? No, I am not proud of any of them."[47] And unless he made the effort to go into the rooms where the carvings were stored, he did not regularly see the majority of them. At one point early in the research I asked him if he would miss the collection if it was sold. He thought for a moment and then replied no, he would not, but added that he would miss the woodcock and the capercaillie "because I was hunting them in Austria and Hungary."[48] So, while the trophy collection symbolized the control and authority he experienced as a hunter, the carving collection reminded him of the loss of control and the lack of authority he experienced as an immigrant.

I also asked him if having the birds made him happy. His response was quick and pointed.

> No, it doesn't make me happy. I have bad memories as I made these birds. Especially these [referring to the carvings from the maple branch]. You can't imagine what a turmoil was there. It was awful these days, these times, awful, awful.[49]

Reminded of those times, he continued to relate other awful experiences. He talked about his game room--a room large enough to accommodate the hundreds of trophies housed there, and later, after he had fled Hungary, a room large enough to stable many

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[47]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

[48]Notes, 3 July 1989, 1.

[49]Notes, 17 May 1990, 4. Simon J. Bronner observed the similar feelings on the part of George Blume, a wood carver from Indiana. In The Chain Carvers: Old Men Crafting Meaning (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1985) 41.

horses. "As the Russians came in, they put twenty-two horses in this room," he said.[50] And then he spoke of the "special guns" he had been collecting for over thirty years, "expensive guns, handmade," and the three he managed to take with him to Austria which were immediately confiscated. "It took ten minutes and they took them away."[51]

Both the content of his responses and the forcefulness of their delivery took me by surprise and forced me to confront the interpretive paradigms I had been constructing. Was it simply a matter of not paying attention, of not carefully listening to everything he was saying? Or was I unwittingly falling into the trap of searching for the "poor but happy artisan?"[52] Barbara Babcock encountered a similar situation in her work with Helen Cordero where the answers given to questions asked didn't meet her expectations and she wondered how she might get the information she sought. After some consideration of both the questions asked and the responses given, Babcock discovered that what she desired to learn was less important than what she had already been told and that what really mattered was meaning.[53] Eventually, in a now familiar pattern, the conversation wended its way back to the carvings and he told

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[50]Notes, 17 May 1990, 4.

[51]Notes, 17 May 1990, 4.

[52]Kenneth L. Ames, Beyond Necessity: Art in the Folk Tradition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1977) 27-28.

[53]Barbara Babcock, "Modeled Selves: Helen Cordero's 'Little People'" in Turner and Bruner 325.

me that he did find satisfaction and enjoyment in the carvings, but it rested in the making of the collection, in carving, painting, assembling, and organizing. Through these processes Zergenyi was actively engaged in work which had the potential of restoring a sense of order and meaning in his life, if only for awhile. Kenneth Ames comes to a similar conclusion in his evaluation of the role carving played in the life of the nineteenth century itinerant carver Wilhelm Schimmel. Rather than locating Schimmel in the "poor but happy artisan" class, Ames contends that his carving

> provided an escape from a world with which he could not cope, that it allowed him to become immersed in an activity of which he was the master and which granted him a degree of stability and release from the emotional stress and confusion with which he apparently struggled.[54]

We came back to this topic several days later after a visit to the Wendell Gilley Museum in nearby Southwest Harbor. We had stopped for a walk along Eagle Lake, one of the many lakes in Maine's Acadia National Park. A wide, sandy path ran along the edge of the lake and we strolled slowly along its course, shaded by a mixture of hardwoods and conifers, while Troy nosed his way on ahead of us. As we walked we talked about hunting in Austria. Of all the animals he had hunted in the Carpathian Mountains, the white boar was the most difficult one he said.[55] He paused,

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[54]Ames 28. See also Bronner.

[55]According to James Howe, the boar was a species accorded great respect by medieval Englishmen because of its fierce nature and edible flesh. In "Fox Hunting as Ritual," American Ethnologist 8 (1981): 293

framing reminiscences with thoughtful silences. "I am a good hunter." After a brief lapse, he added, "I'm not a good carver, but I was a good hunter."[56]

The visit to the Gilley Museum played no small role in Zergenyi's impromptu evaluation of his skills. The museum's namesake, Wendell Gilley, had lived his life in Southwest Harbor where he worked for a number of years running a plumbing business.[57] He was also an avid hunter and an experienced taxidermist. As well, he was an accomplished wood carver and the knowledge of wildlife gained in both hunting and taxidermy informed the highly realistic pieces he created. Gilley carved mostly birds common to the area where he lived: ducks, herons, eagles, and owls were his favorite and his work became so popular that he gave up his plumbing business to pursue carving full time.

Zergenyi was very impressed with Gilley's fine workmanship and skilful portrayal of the various species on display in the museum dedicated to him. His reaction to Gilley's work prompted an aesthetic critique of his own. As we viewed the carvings he repeatedly made comments such as "nice, nice" and "beautiful" and when we came to the miniatures he said, "These small ones [are] very, very nice and very good." Half way or so through our tour he turned to me and said, "Mr. Gilley is

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[56]Notes, 18 May 1990, 4.

[57]See Phyllis Méras, A Yankee Way With Wood (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975) 7-11 and "Wendell Gilley (1904-1983)," ts., Wendell Gilley Museum, Southwest Harbor, ME, 1.

an artist. That is the difference. I am a hobbyist."[58] A few moments later he commented, "You see if I would see this before I started carving my birds would be nicer. If I would see this my birds would be better." I asked him how Gilley might have influenced his work and he responded that his carvings might have been "better painted, better in details." I followed up by asking him if he felt he could have produced the highly-detailed, lifelike carvings Gilley did and he said, "I could if I take the time and [had] the tools. I didn't have the tools. That is the difference."[59] When we returned home he commented, "I would say this famous artist could not make a better pintail duck with the simple tools than I have done here" (fig 83). With a tone of resignation in his voice he explained, as he had so many times before, "I had no money."[60]

Inadequate resources in the form of little money and poor tools have been a constant source of frustration. Zergenyi was accustomed to having the finest of instruments--be they guns, dogs, or agricultural equipment--and he was forever disappointed by his inability to acquire good wood working tools which would have enabled him to produce better carvings. His comments on lacking money and working

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[58]Throughout the research Zergenyi has consistently referred to himself as a hobbyist and has steadfastly resisted being called an artist, although he does grant artistic qualities to some of his work Artists are carvers like Gilley who devote hundreds of hours to the production of one piece which is as lifelike a representation of the subject as possible.

[59]All of the above quotes come from Notes, 18 May 1990, 3.

[60]Notes, 18 May 1990, 4.

Figure 83. Pintail duck.

with inferior tools are not delivered as excuses, but as explanations. His need to offer explanations reflects deeper attitudes toward the tools of one's trade and demonstrates how identities and objects become enmeshed.[61] Zergenyi was accustomed to precision and accuracy in the tools he plied and his successes as a hunter and farmer were bound up with these tools, such that they become in essence extensions of him and not merely accessories. This is especially true of his guns and his dogs which, in concert, located him in the natural world in a way that he could not on his own and ensured a measure of control over this world. Thus, he is painfully aware of the lack of control he experienced with poor tools and the inadequate resources available to him as a carver. With this in mind, it becomes clearer why he scoffs at my question of feeling proud of the carvings because they, like the poor tools used to execute them, have the power to symbolize his marginalized status.

Later that same day, he returned to the issue of the quality of his work when he joined me at the dining room table where I was in the process of documenting various of his carvings. He surveyed the assortment of boxes and birds and sat thoughtfully for a moment as he examined one or two in close detail. When he spoke he quietly said:

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[61]See Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 108-109.

> I say this from my heart. This is good work for these tools that I had. . . . They come from the heart. Not for the money. I was not interested in the money.[62]

As I ponder his responses to my questions about his feelings toward the collection as well as the evaluation of his work prompted by our visit to the Gilley Museum, I am struck by their consistent themes of disappointment, frustration, and justification. As such, I am forced to reconsider whether the ambivalence I reported previously is a true representation of his feelings or an artifact of my interpretation. Perhaps in the daily course of things, ambivalence best describes his feelings. But I think any really deep consideration of the carvings and the collection provokes a broad range of responses from frustration and despair to justification, acceptance, and perhaps even some measure of comfort. However, when he *speaks* of the birds, when he engages the years of knowledge and experience in narrating their stories, his eyes brighten, his voice changes, and his spirits lift--all indicators of a more positive involvement with the forms. At these times, he is in perfect control and he seems happy or at least content.

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[62]Notes, 18 May 1990, 5. Compare Helen Cordero's comments about her storyteller figures: "They come from my heart," in Babcock, "Modeled Selves" 326. Figurative statements such as this one (so common as to be almost formulaic) underscore the artist's personal investment in and degree of attachment to the things they make.

Over the years, Zergenyi's work attracted many admirers. With few exceptions however (the wall plaques made specifically for sale being one), he kept his distance from the general arts and crafts market, although he could have used the money from the sale of individual carvings to finance his hobby. For a short period of time he did place some of his work on concession in a craft store in a neighboring town where he sold a fair number of carvings. In addition, some unusual circumstances led him to take a significant commission which was a request to produce a collection of carved birds for a group of school children from Yarmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts. A member of faculty had seen a small piece on Zergenyi in Yankee magazine, a publication featuring articles on the traditions of New England.[63] One of the school's pupils had recently died and since he was very fond of birds the teacher contacted Zergenyi and asked if he would be willing to make a small collection of carvings in memory of the child. At their behest he created a collection of approximately twenty carvings of birds that frequented local shores and back yards.

Zergenyi was also very briefly involved in teaching wood carving. He did not solicit students, rather several people who became aware of his carving asked if he might give them lessons and he was quite willing to do so. He recalled his students

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[63]Some time in the 1970s Maria had contacted Yankee magazine and asked them to do a feature on her father and his collection of carvings. Because he was not living in New England at the time they could not write a feature article, but instead included a paragraph describing his work. This short piece, however, generated much interest in the carvings.

were all women. "I teach several, always ladies."[64] One of his students, an architect by training, was quite talented and he proudly reported that after only six or seven lessons she had sold a carving. He recalled telling her, "You will be a good carver," because he said turning to me "she can draw."[65] He enjoyed teaching and the opportunity it gave him to demonstrate not only his technical competence, but also his general ornithological knowledge. Instruction was, after all, the purpose for making the collection and although in this case he was primarily teaching his students the technical skills of wood carving, at the same time they were also learning something about the subject of ornithology.

His intentions, however, were not to merchandize his skills as a wood carver catering piecemeal to the folk art or souvenir market. Instead, his objective was to create a study collection and so dedicated was he to this objective that he would refuse to sell a piece from the collection even if there was a buyer with ready cash in hand. According to his daughter Maria this stance served a dual purpose:

> He preferred to sell to certain people only. He never sold part of the collection, rather he'd tell people he'd make a duplicate of a certain bird for them. This eliminated the "souvenir shoppers," leaving those who were truly interested.[66]

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[64]Notes, 27 July 1989, 2.

[65]Notes, 16 May 1990, 3.

[66]Doolittle, letter, March 1990.

The collection never found its way to Cornell or to a museum or to any other educational institution, with the exception of the few times portions of it were displayed. Zergenyi's prime advocate, Dr. Hamilton, became ill and was unable to act on his behalf. Zergenyi himself was uncomfortable with the prospect of promoting his collection to the university hierarchy, although in retrospect he regrets he didn't go directly to the president of Cornell and try to interest him in it. However, he remains committed to his objective of finding a permanent home for the collection in a university or museum. Over the years various cultural institutions have expressed an interest in acquiring a representative sample of his work, but he refuses to break up the collection. "I want to keep them together. This was the purpose--an object of study."[67]

In the following chapter, I examine in detail Zergenyi's explicit goal of creating the collection as a pedagogical tool and also suggest other, more implicit objectives he may of had in mind as he worked. The discussion of his creative intentions is framed within the context of the relationships he anticipated and developed with the audiences for his carving.

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[67]Notes, 19 May 1990, p. 2.

CHAPTER SIX

ARTISTIC INTENTIONS, AUDIENCE REACTIONS

A crucial component in a folklore performance is the relationship between the performer and audience. Much of the audience's ability to derive meaning from the performance relies on knowledge and experiences shared between them and the performer. The audience gets the point because they are able, as Anna Caraveli so beautifully demonstrates in her concept of the "the song beyond the song" to "complete" the meaning by drawing on a shared history and tradition. She contends:

> It is the degree of the song's dependency on a world outside of it and the ensuing interaction between song and community, past and present, that define the song and render the system of folk aesthetics a communicative process by which an "incomplete" song is "completed" by the meaning found in the forces surrounding it."[1]

Cultural and social commonalities render the direct articulation of meaning and intention redundant. Although writing about song, her comments on the comprehension of meaning can be usefully extended to the full range of expressive behaviors.

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[1]Anna Caraveli, "The Song Beyond the Song: Aesthetics and Social Interaction in Greek Folksong," Journal of American Folklore 95:2 (1982): 130. On the relationship of the traditional artist to his or her community, see Jane C. Beck, "Always in Season: Folk Art and Traditional Culture in Vermont," in Beck, Always in Season 17-51.

In the case of Zergenyi and his carvings, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of meanings and communities, due to both the complex nature of his relationship to place and to the people who formed his audience. I prefer the term audience to community for several reasons. First, while the notion of community subsumes the idea of audience in any discussion of folk performance, the term audience does not. Audiences are not always or necessarily made up of members of one's community. There are countless circumstances where folk performers engage in their traditions before an audience with whom they may share very little, festivals being a prime example. And, in today's mass-mediated world, audience becomes a much more realistic representation of who actually views or hears the traditional performance. Second, while community can be defined as a political or geographical unit, the community we think of as folklorists is a conceptual entity based on a consensus of cultural values and social norms, what Elliott Oring calls "a consciousness of kind."[2] Thus, any community consists of a number of audiences with varying degrees of attentiveness and interest in any particular traditional performance. Finally, the idea of audience suggests an active, actual engagement on the part of both performer and audience, where there exists a heightened awareness of and attention to values, aesthetics, and objectives. In this chapter, I examine Zergenyi's relationship to his audiences and discuss the nature and degree of identification he achieved with them.

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[2]Elliott Oring, "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore," in Oring, Folk Groups 25.

Considering his audience, it is more accurate to see them as two audiences. One is his actual audience, the other his "imagined audience."[3] His actual audience consisted mostly of Zergenyi's close friends and family members, while his other audience he imagined as students or museum patrons--if he couldn't sell the collection to a university or college, he hoped to interest a museum in purchasing it.

While Zergenyi was not really interested in producing carvings for sale to individuals, his work did attract local attention and requests to purchase pieces naturally followed. The majority of his customers were friends or acquaintances from Cornell and people from neighboring communities who learned of his work primarily through word of mouth. I asked him to describe these transactions and he said, if someone came to visit "then I show him the carvings and say nothing was for sale." He added "if I sell it then I wouldn't have the collection and I always wanted a large bird collection."[4] While it is only partially true that "nothing was for sale," he did refuse to sell pieces directly from the collection and would instead take orders for

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[3]I would like to thank Joyce Ice for suggesting the use of this term. Barre Toelken suggests similar categories in the distinctions he makes between types of audiences. The terms "actual" and "imagined" correspond to his notion of a central audience and a cultural audience, respectively. The central audience exerts "influence on the nature of the performance," while the cultural audience is described as an implied audience which is not necessarily physically present, but is one performers consider as they work. See Barre Toelken, The Dynamics of Folklore (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979) 106-117.

[4]Notes, 16 July 1991, 2.

replicas.[5] He didn't want to, but felt compelled, he said, almost apologetically, "because I didn't have the money."[6] Customers could also buy one of the extra carvings (consisting of mostly game birds--the woodcock being the most popular--and owls) he sometimes had on hand and occasionally there were some who would commission a special piece or two. John King, a professor in Cornell's veterinary school and friend of Zergenyi's, recalled his first purchase:

> I wanted a carving for the wife and this guy said, "Oh I got a guy that carved a big eagle for me"--I think it was an eagle. . . . So I went out there and that's the first time I met him and I bought an owl from him, because he didn't have any more big birds, and whatever he wanted to sell it for I bought it. And, he wanted to give it to me because he had a problem with his dog--as a veterinarian I could help him a little bit, but no come--I knew what they cost so I paid him.[7]

King went on to describe his other purchases which included a duck, some chimney swifts, and a woodcock.

Rosemary Wood, who lived in a nearby town, was also one of Zergenyi's customers. At their first meeting she recalled how "he very carefully explained how he studied and assembled the different species."[8] She bought carvings as gifts for

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[5]Cf. memory painter Ray Faust who "will not relinquish an image, which she characterizes as a 'kapitl fun mayn lebn' (a chapter of my life), until she has painted a replacement," in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review," in Oring, A Reader 331.

[6]Notes, 17 May 1990, 2.

[7]John King, personal interview, 27 July 1991.

[8]Rosemary Wood, letter to the author, 25 June 1991.

others and also for herself including an owl, a grouse, and a large Canada goose, for which she recalled paying twelve, fifteen, and thirty-five dollars, respectively. Wood learned of Zergenyi's carving through an article about him in a local newspaper.

A.K. Fletcher was the article's author and he had heard of Zergenyi through a friend. So, with "camera and pen in hand" he went for a visit. Years later he would recall, "What I found out about him and how he accomplished the work of carving and painting birds really got to me."[9] At their first meeting he ordered seven Canada geese in flight and later purchased a free standing Canada goose measuring twenty inches long and seventeen inches high. "That beautiful Goose has been by my chair for at least the 30 years I've had it."[10] Over the years, he purchased several other carvings.

> Fletcher's first meeting with Zergenyi left a series of lasting impressions:
>
> I'll never forget the first time I went to see Andrew--it was necessary to wade through great quantities of chips from his carvings in order to see his work rooms.[11]

He maintained an interest in Zergenyi and his carvings and when he cleared the land to build his home he gave the felled basswood trees to his friend for use in his carving. Zergenyi rarely forgot a kindness extended to him, however large or small,

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[9]A.K. Fletcher, letter to the author, 13 August 1990.

[10]Fletcher, letter, 13 August 1990.

[11]Fletcher, letter, 13 August 1990.

and would often express his gratitude through the gift of a carving. In a letter written to Zergenyi years later, Fletcher recalled the gift he received:

> When I was getting ready to leave, one day you brought to my office a box in which was a Texas Scissor-Tail Flycatcher in it as a p rting gift to me. I have kept that beautiful bird with us for the past 20 plus years in a very prominent place in our homes.[12]

The majority of Zergenyi's carvings owned by others were not acquired through purchase, but rather as gifts. Although he was a careful steward of the collection and did not sell or, until recently, even give pieces from it, there were certain species of birds, like the woodcock, the grouse, and other game birds, that he especially enjoyed making and thus carved a number of them over the years. Close friends and family would receive carvings on their birthdays, Christmas, and other occasions, in commemoration of a special event or simply as a gesture of friendship. Sometimes Zergenyi selected the piece, other times he would ask the recipient to choose the carving they liked. I asked Gordie Hollern to describe this experience:

> Gordie: Well, he generally would like at Christmas time would give me or try to get me to select on: which I, I treasure them all, but I didn't really want to take any, because it's, you know, it was something that he'd spent a lot of time and effort on and I treasure them, but usually at Christmas he'd gave me a bird or a carving.
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> Melissa: How would that work? How would that work in terms--would he take you upstairs and say pick one of these or?

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[12]A.K. Fletcher, letter to Andrew Zergenyi, 25 April 1990.

> Gordie: No. He'd have some you know downstairs somewhere, two or three, and he'd want me to pick one of them. And I'd say you pick one and he'd say no you pick one. And, so I would.[13]

Like others, Bob Hughes received carvings at Christmas, but a number of the pieces he was given related to his special interest in big game hunting. He explained:

> First time I went for brown bear . . . he gave us a carving of a brown bear, but after it, well like the third time I went and had the black bear, and the brown bear, and the white bear why he made us a lamp and had the black and white and brown bear on it. And before we went to Africa why he carved some of these birds and give them to us so we'd know what to look for when we were there. And well, just, well every Christmas and then sometimes in between he give us something for--he even knew my wife's birthday, I guess and he'd give her something on her birthday or whenever.[14]

If a close friend admired a particular piece, Zergenyi was known to make one for them. Such was the case with Mrs. Hughes who fancied a carving of a black goose he had recently completed. Mr. Hughes recalled the details:

> Well we was over there one time--that black uh, I can't remember the name of it right now--it's a goose, a black goose, quite rare and my wife and I was over there one time I think and he'd just finished one and of course she was admiring it. So, right away soon as he got one done he brought it right over to us (he laughs) cause he knew that she'd like it.[15]

And if he knew someone had a special interest in a particular bird, he would take the opportunity to make a carving for him or her. Kay Ross described how her son came to acquire a carving of an African Gray parrot in this manner:

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[13]Gordon Hollern, personal interview, 27 July 1991.

[14]Bob Hughes, personal interview, 26 July 1990.

[15]Bob Hughes, personal interview, 26 July 1990.

> My husband had taken him to Mr. Zergenyi's house for a visit and to see his carvings. Our son owned an African Gray and told him all about it. A few weeks later he came into my husband's veterinary office and brought the carving for Tom. He had never seen one, but found an article on African Grays in National Geographic.[16]

After his wife's death in October 1980, Zergenyi donated an ensemble of carved birds to the intensive care unit at Tompkins County Hospital in Ithaca, New York. He made the carving specifically for placement in the unit's sparsely decorated waiting room where he had spent several long and difficult hours just prior to Mrs. Zergenyi's death. The ensemble consists of seventeen carvings of species local to the area including a cardinal, robin, oriole, nuthatch, chickadee, and sparrow mounted on the remnants of an old stump fence. On the base in front of the stand were placed two small wooden circles--on one was painted his wife's family crest and on the other his own. A rectangular bronze plaque attached to the base of the carving reads:

In Memoriam
Mrs. Clara Vitez Zergenyi
born
Clara von Svastics zv Bocsar

A carving he did in 1990 for his grandaughter-in-law Jan was inspired by her last name. Jan's husband Tom described how the carving came about:

> Last spring sometime, Grandpa came to the realization that Jan's last name was Blackburn, and that there was a bird called a Blackburnian warbler. The next time he saw her, he told her he was going to carve one for her. I didn't really take him too seriously--he hadn't done any birds in years. . . . The next thing I knew I was helping him pick out band saws and power drills from the Sears

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[16]Kay Ross, letter to the author, 1 July 1991.

> catalog for this project. . . . If you look closely the hand isn't quite as steady on the detail painting, and the carving isn't as even and balanced as on the birds he did when I was young, but that just makes the carvings all the more special to me--the effort and love he put into these two birds really shows.[17]

As noted above, Zergenyi did not give away carvings from the collection, not until recently anyway and then only under special circumstances. I am aware of only a few occasions where he actually gave away original pieces from the collection. When his grandson Tom was only a child he gave him an owl that Tom especially liked as a birthday present. Given that Zergenyi was actively carving at the time, he may very well have made another owl to replace the one given to his grandson, thus keeping the collection intact. Such was not the case when he gave carvings to his two granddaughters-in-law and his two great-granddaughters for Christmas in 1989. As others had before, they were instructed to pick out the carving they favored from a group of ducks made by Zergenyi years before. Knowing the carvings could not be replaced made the gifts all the more precious. As Tom said, "It was truly a great gift of himself to each of us."[18]

His daughter Maria has been the recipient of many carvings over the years and I asked her if she had a favorite one. She replied:

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[17]Tom Doolittle, letter to the author, 13 August 1991. Figures 54-56 show Zergenyi in the process of making this carving.

[18]Tom Doolittle, letter, 13 August 1991.

> My favorites are many. I love all the ducks! But my very favorite is the woodcock he carves, it is a very European bird and dear to his heart so I think he gives them [the] most "soul." I have one I treasure a great deal.[19]

I have also been given carvings that came directly from the collection. The first one was given to me in the summer of 1989 as we prepared the carvings for the exhibition. He chose the carving, a pair of masked African love birds--a piece I had admired on several occasions (see fig 73). Although I was deeply touched by the gesture, I initially refused the gift as I felt uncomfortable accepting a piece from the collection, not because I didn't like it, but because I knew it could not be replaced. He was annoyed with my response and I attempted to explain my rationale for refusing, but after several weeks and much discussion, I finally accepted his gift as the token of appreciation and friendship he intended it to be. Like others, I value the carving for its connection to the maker and as a symbol of our friendship. I was also given one of the five woodducks he produced in 1990 during his return to wood carving (fig 84). Two were given to family members and one was given to a physician of his. One he kept for the collection.

Later that year, I was present when Zergenyi offered a carving to a man he had met only minutes before as a way of expressing the deep gratitude he felt toward him for extending a small kindness.[20] To the intended recipient the offer seemed out of

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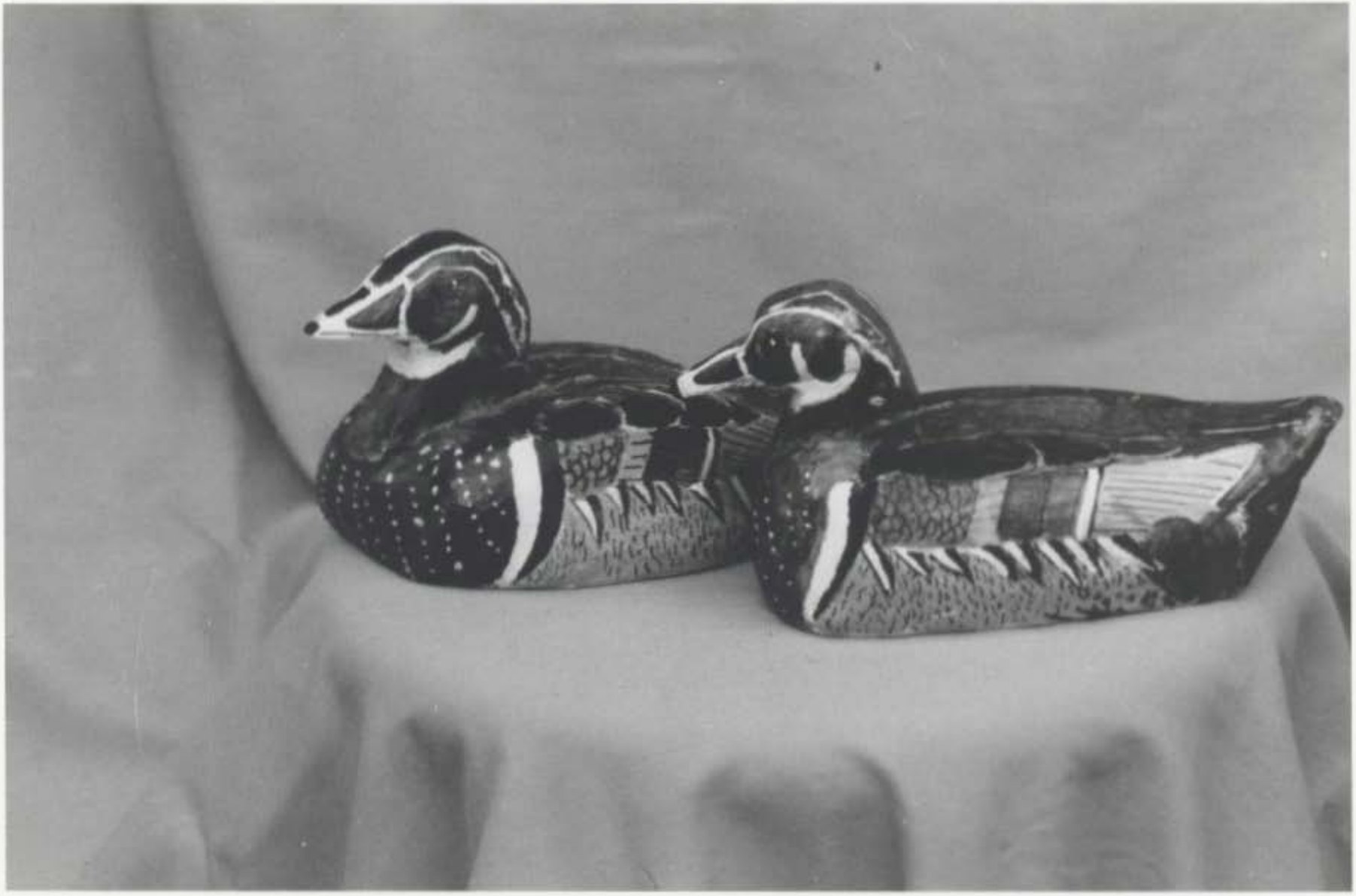
[19]Maria Doolittle, letter to the author, 19 July 1989.

[20]The small kindness was to give me a ride to Zergenyi's home which was several miles from where I was staying at the time. The significance of this quotidian gesture rested not only in the fact that I had been away for several months, but also that

Figure 84. Woodducks, two of five made by Zergenyi in 1990. It was his largest output of carvings in a decade.



proportion to the service rendered and I was completely taken aback by the query "Would you like a bird, sir?"[21] But what seemed like a small gesture to us was of some significance to Zergenyi and he acknowledged his appreciation as best he could at the time through the gift of a carving.

Even those who were not recipients of his carvings or connected to Zergenyi through ties of family or friendship, responded very positively to his work. Gordie Hollern, who assisted his friend in his efforts to sell the collection to a university or museum, recalled the impression it made on one interested party:

> He was amazed at the detail and the amount of work that he did. In fact, talk about the last time I saw him--that was several years ago--but he asked about Andy and the birds and what happened to the collection.[22]

And John King, who also tried to help him sell the collection, commented, ". . . Everybody else who went up said my gosh he's got a lot, a lot of beautiful carvings."[23] In addition, on the occasions when portions of the collection were exhibited at Cornell University's Ornithological Laboratory and the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, the carvings received much acclaim. The shapes, colors, and textures of the carvings and the detailed attention to the environments in which

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Zergenyi had been anxious about my travelling and was relieved to see me safe and sound.

[21]Notes, 11 November 1989, 1.

[22]Gordon Hollern, personal interview, 27 July 1991.

[23]John King, personal interview, 27 July 1991.

they were placed were indeed impressive. And while it is fair to say that reactions of these audiences were aesthetically rather than scientifically based, their responses nonetheless served as recognition and validation of Zergenyi skills and knowledge.

Clearly, Zergenyi had gained a reputation locally as a skilled wood carver and his work captured the interest and appreciation of a dedicated audience: "I treasure them," "That beautiful goose has been by my chair," ". . . the effort and love he put into these two birds really shows," "It was truly a great gift of himself to each of us," "I have one I treasure a great deal." Through the sale of individual carvings, Zergenyi fostered connections to the community in which he lived. Through the gift of carvings, he reinforced existing ties to family and strengthened newly-formed friendships. Friends, family, acquaintances, and customers value the carvings they have "because they mean something both aesthetically and emotionally."[24] The carvings are appreciated for themselves as objects of art, but more importantly they are "treasured" as markers of shared histories and experiences. For this audience, the carvings are most valued as symbols of the maker and their meaning is located within a system of personal and social relations.

Zergenyi has been attentive to the tastes and desires of this actual audience and undoubtedly he has derived much pleasure and satisfaction in making and giving carvings. But an audience he was really interested in attracting, the one he held in his mind as he created the collection is what I call his imagined audience. This imagined

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[24]Beck, "Always in Season" 51.

audience consisted of students interested generally in nature and more specifically in ornithology who would use this "study collection" of carvings as instructional aids, as learning models. Unlike the stuffed birds, the carvings could be closely examined and from Zergenyi's perspective, students would be much more interested in learning about birds through hands-on experience than they would through simply reading a written description in a textbook. After all, this was precisely the manner in which he himself had learned about the natural world--through direct experience combined with careful study.

As noted in the previous chapter, Zergenyi was unsuccessful in selling the collection to Cornell or to any other place. He explains his lack of success as the result of a number of mitigating factors including the inability of his prime advocate and supporter, Dr. Hamilton, to lobby on his behalf and his own reticence to personally promote the collection to the university administration. Zergenyi feels, however, there are other reasons why his collection has not generated the interest he anticipated or desired among the educational institutions with which he has been in contact. The most compelling reason he offers relates to one of the very issues he was attempting to redress with the collection: the provincialism of American interests and attitudes, or as he has recently called it, "American chauvinism." Looking at a copy of Birds in Art 1989[25] featuring depictions of birds in a variety of media from painting

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[25]Birds in Art 1989, An International Exhibition, organized by Leigh Yawkey Woodson Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin, 1989.

to sculpture, he shook his head in disapproval as he turned the pages. The illustrations were beautiful and the work of the artists finely-wrought and with these aspects of the publication he was impressed and very complimentary. What disappointed him was its overall content--it featured only American birds. On another occasion he thrust towards me an instruction manual for decoy carving along with a copy of Birder's World, an ornithological magazine to which he subscribes, and complained that the templates in the former and the articles in the latter featured only American birds. Later, he pointed to Natural History, a magazine he likes very much and one which features articles on species from around the world. He noted that all the birds featured in articles in this magazine are also in the collection. "Therefore," he contended, "the carvings are interesting."[26] Holding the magazine tightly in his hands, he offered it as evidence in support of his decision to make a collection with an international focus. He voiced his frustration:

> They [Americans] are interested in only American birds. That's my trouble. I am interested in all birds. They are interested in only American birds.[27]

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[26]Notes, 16 July 1991, 1.

[27]Notes, 16 July 1991, p. 2. Writing about post World War II Hungarian political refugees living in the United States, Steven Bela Vardy comments that "because of their learning and past social status, the majority of them felt culturally superior to the relatively 'uncultured' average American they encountered in their new places of employment" in The Hungarian-Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985) 133. It was a misconception, he contends, that ultimately resulted in further marginalizing an already fringe group.

The collection with its international focus contrasts sharply with Zergenyi's perceptions of his audience as being provincial in their outlook and interests. One of the reasons he gives for not wanting to break up the collection is precisely this perception of Americans being interested in only American things. If the collection were to be dismantled, his concern is that relatively little interest would be shown in birds from regions outside of North America. He expressed this concern more than once as the following comment by Gordie Hollern indicates:

> He did, I remember, talk about part of it--there were some birds, some species that people may not have as much interest in from, I believe, Africa or somewhere that may not be as interesting to folks and I guess if he kept them all together then it'd be much easier.[28]

In insisting the collection be kept together and dealt with as a unit, Zergenyi was essentially compelling his audience to consider the diversity of interesting species of birds living beyond the borders of their immediate locale. Examination of the familiar and the known would lead, he hoped, to exploration of the strange and unknown and by extension, the education of his audience.

There is no doubt Zergenyi intended the collection to function pedagogically, to be "an object of study," "to teach" students about birds. But did he have anything else in mind as he assembled the collection and considered its audience? Given the circumstances of his life and the issues he felt strongly about, are there alternative

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[28]Hollern, personal interview, 17 July 1991.

readings of the work? In other words, how might the collection be "unpacked to elucidate"[29] the complex of intentions and meanings inscribed therein?

"Inscription" or the fixation of meaning, according to Paul Ricoeur, is the process of embodying thought and behavior in a cultural text on which both author and researcher alike can dwell long after the thought has passed and the behavior has ceased.[30] These "texts" are not limited to those shaped from words, but can include a whole range of expressivity from ritual to material culture. Describing cultural behavior in terms of textual analogies creates a metaphorical world in which sound and action create "texts" which the ethnographer "reads" and where otherwise mute forms of expression are given the power of speech. For example, Barbara Myerhoff approached both a demonstration by senior citizens as well as a mural they had painted depicting significant events in their collective experience "as texts to be read,"[31] while Clifford Geertz described the function of the Balinese cockfight as "a Balinese reading of Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves,"[32] and it was a foxhunter's description of barking hounds on the chase as a

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[29]Barbara Myerhoff, "'Life Not Death in Venice': Its Second Life," in Turner and Bruner 262.

[30]Quoted in Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983) 31 in the context of his discussion of the "text analogy," 30-33. See as well Myerhoff 273.

[31]Myerhoff 280.

[32]Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," Myth, Symbol, and Culture, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971)

"beautiful story" that led Mary Hufford to study foxhunting in terms of cultural texts, in terms of stories and storytelling.[33] Zergenyi himself situated the carvings within this textual framework when he said, "every bird has its own story." Interpreting these cultural texts involves delving below surface actions and behind explicit articulations of purpose to get at deeper levels of meaning symbolically embodied in the expressive behavior. Thus, "every bird has its own story," but taken together as a collection, did they tell any other stories?

One such story inscribed within the collection is a concern with place both on personal and cultural levels. Extending the metaphor, the collection may be seen as a form of commentary on the importance of being attentive to one's position in the larger scheme of things. Setting the individual carvings in their natural contexts and organizing the collection according to geographic region demonstrates the importance Zergenyi placed on the proper attention to place and placement. As a person displaced not once, but twice, by both world wars, each time forced to give up his home, it is to be expected that a concern for place would become a recurrent theme in Zergenyi's life and work.

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[33]Mary Hufford, Chaseworld, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992) 6. Another notable example of endowing cultural artifacts with verbal abilities is the Pueblo pottery figure of the Storyteller figure made famous by Helen Cordero. The difference is that here the maker engages the potteries in dialogue and hears them "singing" literally, not metaphorically. See Barbara Babcock, "Modeled Selves" in Turner and Bruner 326.

He frames his own interest in the subject of place explicitly in terms of a long standing interest in geography and nature and implicitly in terms of his role as a displaced person. Through the collection and through narrative, he indirectly contrasts his personal interest in the subject with that of his imagined audience or more precisely an extension of this audience: the American government, whose interest in world affairs he characterizes in terms of a history of aggressive interference in places they do not belong. While much of his commentary on this issue strives for the dispassionate tone of an outside observer, there is also a personal side to this argument. To this day, Zergenyi remains resentful of American intervention in Europe during the Second World War saying on one occasion, "I was very mad because Americans came there fighting. They have nothing to do in Europe."[34] He could understand the Canadian involvement in the war due to their historic ties to Britain and the Commonwealth, but he found American intervention more difficult to justify in the absence of similar long standing allegiances. An ardent anti-communist, he remains disillusioned by the failed promise of democracy to stem the tide of communism and disappointed by what seems to him to be its one outstanding feature:

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[34]Notes, 19 May 1990, 1. However he feels about American involvement in the European theater during World War II does not alter the fact that it was Hungary who ultimately, if somewhat reluctantly, declared war on the United States. While I am only speculating, perhaps his resentment may also stem from the disillusionment Hungarians felt when American and British forces failed to reach Hungary before the Russian invasion or German occupation in 1944, thus negating the possibility of Hungary joining the Allied forces. For a discussion of this issue see Mark Imre Major, American Hungarian Relations 1918-1944 (Astor, FL: Danubian P, Inc., 1974) 229-246.

war.[35] He voiced his feelings on the subject during a conversation we had on how I should end the thesis. Holding a recent copy of National Geographic featuring an article on China he said,

> I am here forty years, not quite forty years. It was the Korean War. It was the Panama War. It was the Arabian War. What other? [ML: Vietnam.] It was the Vietnam War. If things aren't going very good in democratic places, they make war. Nicaragua. Don't forget Nicaragua. We are everywhere. We have military everywhere. . . . The Chinese are still in China, not in outposts.

I asked how this pertained to him and he responded, "So I have the feeling here like an Inuit would in the Amazon basin. So I feel."

"Out of place?" I asked.

"Yeah. Now you put this at the end," he said.[36]

Later in our conversation I insisted, as others had before me, that there must have been some advantages to life in the United States.[37] He agreed, stating quite firmly that "Nobody can live so good, a d.p., as in America."

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[35]This discussion took place on the dawning of the dissolution of the communist hold on Eastern Bloc countries and the rise of populist governments. We have since discussed these political events in light of his comments, but with almost a century's worth of experience and observation of the mercurial workings of world affairs, he remains distrustful and sceptical of the changes in Europe and the former Soviet Union.

[36]Notes, 18 July 1992, 1.

[37]I refer here to the exchange between Zergenyi and his boss Dr. Murphy who assumed that Zergenyi's life in United States must have been better than the one he left behind in Hungary. See chapter two.

The discussion had struck a chord and stirred Zergenyi's emotions and thoughts to the extent that he raised the subject again the next morning. Its importance was underscored by an unusual gesture on his part to ensure that I got it right. Rather than his typical resistance to the process of documentation, here he encouraged it, telling me to get a pencil and a piece of paper and that he would speak slowly so I could take notes. This is what he said:

> Do you know the story of Diogenes? [I shake my head no.] He was living in a barrel and in the daytime he went away with a lamp holding [it] in his hand. The people were asking him, "What are you doing with the lamp?" He said, "I am looking for an honest man." . . . Now I like best from these old Greeks Aesop who has his fables. Do you know the fable from the frog and the steer? [Again, I shake my head no.] This is the U.S. He wants to take over all the world . . . the frog was on the meadow and have seen the steer and he was thinking how big the steer was and happy he must be and so the frog blew himself up and went to pieces. I am afraid the U.S. will be the same one day. That's all. I have more, but that's enough.[38]

In the preceding passages he reveals his anger, his frustrations, and importantly, his fears. His words, like his art, articulate an abiding concern with the attentiveness to place. While his words explicitly articulate his apprehensions and disapproval, his art addresses this issue more obliquely through creating forms and assembling a collection where everything is in its rightful place, both individually and collectively.[39] Being in

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[38]Notes, 19 July 1991, 1. See "The Frog Tries in Vain to be as Big as the Ox" (AT 277A).

[39]Willard B. Moore notes that "Commentary on political issues is a historic pattern in the arts" and gives as examples the anti-nuclear Peace Ribbon project, black hairstyles, and public murals in the tradition of those painted during the Great Depression. See Circles of Tradition: Folk Arts in Minnesota (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1989) 16-18.

essence everything that its imagined audience is not, the collection may be seen as an attempt by Zergenyi to offer them an alternative perspective and to persuade them to his "definition of the situation."[40] As such, the collection functions rhetorically. It is his "strategy"[41] for both promoting his viewpoint and seeking to influence or control the viewpoints of others.[42]

Given Zergenyi's own socialization to culture through nature, it is not surprising that he would favor a strategy which relies on relationships in the natural world as a way of commenting on events in the human cultural one. He frequently draws metaphoric relationships between nature and culture. By engaging in a "symbolic discourse about a wild animal" he is engaging in a "symbolic discourse

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[40]Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1959) 3-4.

[41]Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living" in The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, 3rd edition (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 296-298. See also Roger Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore, Journal of American Folklore 81 (1968): 148.

[42]While she does not explicitly frame them as rhetoric, Myerhoff demonstrates how cultural texts function persuasively in "'Life Not Death'" in Turner and Bruner 261-286. The rhetorical nature of material culture has been explored by Thomas A. Michel, "Harry Andres and His Castle: A Rhetorical Study," Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments, ed. Daniel Ward (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1984) 111-123 and Gerald L. Pocius, "Gossip, Rhetoric, and Objects: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Newfoundland Furniture," Perspectives on American Furniture, ed. Gerald W.R. Ward (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1988). A related work is Robert Plant Armstrong, The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1971).

about human social relations."[43] In doing so, he participates in a discourse with a history extending back to Aesop and his fables, a literature he is conversant in as is demonstrated above. The attraction to animals and animal behavior as a way of commenting on human characteristics and interactions is based on "a degree of abstraction or psychic distance which makes moral or intellectual concepts more clear-cut and comprehensible."[44] This is illustrated in the following account where Zergenyi compared world politics to the events on the picnic table on the lawn outside his window where he spread birdseed each morning. I paraphrase it here:

> The dove and the chipmunk eat side by side until the dove becomes aggressive and goes for the chipmunk. Now, they were both fine and eating and then the dove had to attack the chipmunk and now both are not eating. Such is the way in world politics. In the end, no one wins.[45]

The story neatly encapsulates and addresses the ultimate futility of aggression, where often much more is lost than gained. The forcefulness of the account rests in its indirectness; it is not a specific attack, but an observation on human behavior in general and the moral of the story is clear. The impact is enhanced by the fact that

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[43]Angus Gillespie and Jay Mechling, eds. American Wildlife in Symbol and Story (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1987) 1. A beautiful example of the symbolic use of animals in the explication of human social life is presented by Hufford in Chaseworld. Claude Levi-Strauss discusses the symbolic properties of animals in relation to humans in "The Bear and The Barber," Reader in Comparative Religion, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) 181-189.

[44]Kenneth L. Ames, Beyond Necessity: Art in the Folk Tradition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1977) 49.

[45]Notes, 18 May 1990, p. 2.

here the aggressor is the dove, a bird symbolically associated with peace. Captured then in this brief account of nature observed and subsequently mapped onto the terrain of human social life is a concern with the tenuousness and unpredictability of existence--a concern deeply felt by Zergenyi. Thus, the story not only draws attention to overt behaviors publicly displayed, but also to covert assumptions which do not always mirror the reality they claim.

Certainly Zergenyi could have chosen other traditional strategies for asserting his opinion and persuading others to think as he did, but he could only wonder what kind of reception would be given a voice still resonating with the tones of his native tongue criticizing the very country that ultimately gave him refuge? By pointing out the shortcomings of the United States political system, rather than participating unquestioningly in the discourse of the grateful immigrant (which he was in many ways), he took the chance of engendering anger instead of the empathy he sought. The collection of carvings, however, allowed Zergenyi to voice his opinion in the same subtle and indirect manner characteristic of commentaries relying on animals to address the foibles of humans. Equally important was the reflexive function of the collection. It was simultaneously a shield and a weapon, functioning both as a safe vehic. for expressing the strong opinions of a marginalized voice and also as a means of strengthening and authorizing that voice. The sheer size, complexity, and artistry of the collection forcefully claimed and asserted Zergenyi's status by providing tangible evidence of his skills, knowledge, and extensive experiences in the natural world.

The rhetorical success of any performance is dependent on a number of factors including the strategy selected and the degree of identification the performer achieves with his audience.[46] Effective persuasion is bolstered by the audience's confidence in the "speaker" and by his or her ability to argue the point convincingly. The next question is Zergenyi's relationship to his imagined audience. Did they share a "consciousness of kind" that would form a foundation for the requisite identification? Or was his a voice from the margins?

Zergenyi's imagined audience consisted primarily of mainstream, middle to upper class, American students at Cornell. His position at the university contrasted markedly to that of his audience: he was an immigrant, a refugee employed in a low-status job as a laborer in the greenhouses. Economically, he was lower middle class; socially and culturally, he was on the fringe--in part by choice (he was quite content in his own company), but mostly by circumstance. These factors, coupled with his unassuming manners and reticent nature, gave few clues to his background or experiences. Even those with whom he became friends often knew little about his life in Hungary or the position he enjoyed there. Ultimately, it is impossible to say how his imagined audience may have responded to the carvings, either pedagogically as tools for instruction or rhetorically as tools for persuasion because they never had the opportunity to see or handle them. Based on the comments of his actual audience it is

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[46]Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: U of California P, 1969) 62. Abrahams discusses the importance of identification between performer and audience, 144-149.

fair to say that they probably would have responded very positively to the carvings on an aesthetic level as works of art. And if contextualized properly, the collection could have been didactically useful as well. Although Zergenyi's ideas about the rationale behind and purpose for collections in general was essentially outmoded in the scientific world of late twentieth century America, the students may well have found the carvings interesting as the scientific models they were intended to be.[47] Up to this point I have discussed Zergenyi's relationships with both his actual audience and his imagined one. There is, however, still a further audience which has yet to be considered, an audience for whom the collection did function in several important ways. Like the Balinese who tell themselves about themselves through their story of the cockfight and the senior citizens who "were bearing witness to their own story"[48] through marches, murals and other "definitional ceremonies,"[49] so too was Zergenyi a significant audience for himself. Through making the carvings, assembling the collection, narrating the stories of the birds, and teaching others, Zergenyi was simultaneously performer and audience, "at once subject and object, speaker and

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[47]Wendy Lavitt describes how viewing carvings of exotic species was a means for nineteenth century audiences to learn about animals living in other places. However, she adds that "contemporary folk artists living in a world of mass communication are not depicting wild animals for the edification of their audiences," in Animals in American Folk Art (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990) 7.

[48]Myerhoff 269.

[49]Barbara Myerhoff notes definitional ceremonies are concerned with the "performance of identity," in Number Our Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) 32.

listener in the same story."[50] Through the collection, Zergenyi was, like the Balinese, the senior citizens, and even the foxhunters, seeking to "make sense" of himself. Barbara Myerhoff elaborates on this point:

> One of the most persistent but elusive ways that people make sense of themselves is to show themselves to themselves, through multiple forms: by telling themselves stories; by dramatizing claims in rituals and other collective enactments; by rendering visible actual and desired truths about themselves and the significance of their existence in imaginative and performative productions.[51]

The following story beautifully illustrates Zergenyi's use of an alternative expressive form, narrative, to tell himself and others about himself and to do so in a way that is artful and imaginative. He tells the story with a humorous, playful tone and I paraphrase it here:[52]

> This student came into the greenhouse and asked me to make him ten flats for plants. When I asked him what for (because ten flats was a lot and I didn't want to get in trouble for making so many), he said he was doing research on the ability of pheasants to taste and he was going to plant ten varieties of corn in the ten flats. He would then keep track of which variety or varieties the pheasant liked best. I considered the experiment and the student and asked him if he was interested in my opinion. He said he was and I told him [quite stridently], "Don't bother. The pheasant has no taste. No taste!" The student went away and did the experiment anyway and spent a year researching it and eventually he received his doctorate. I saw him after that and I asked him

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[50]Myerhoff, Number Our Days 222. Compare the foxhunters who "are both authors and readers of a text they continually inscribe onto each other and their surroundings" in Hufford, Chaseworld 9ff.

[51]Myerhoff, "'Life Not Death'" 261.

[52]The version included here is from 23 June 1989, not long after I began working with Zergenyi. It was the first time I had heard the story, but since then I have heard it again. According to Maria, it is a story he has told repeatedly over the years.

> what he had found. He said the pheasants indicated no preference and therefore they had no taste [he laughs heartily]. I too could have gotten my doctorate based on the question of pheasants and their taste, but mine would have been much shorter. Two words in fact: No Taste.

Although the story's audience consists of family and friends--the same people who form the carvings' audience--who are already aware of Zergenyi's background and competence in the field, this does not detract from the impact of the narrative. In fact, it is this very knowledge which makes the story as rhetorically successful as it is. Zergenyi carefully crafts the narrative by placing the Cornell student and his research experiment in the foreground and by leading the listener to believe it is a story about the peculiar dietary inclinations of pheasants. By contrast, he casts himself in the position of manual laborer carrying out the instructions of a superior. His question on the purpose of the flats is asked ostensibly for practical purposes--to justify the unusually large expenditure of time and labor on a student project--rather than for intellectual curiosity. Fully aware of the pheasant's inability to taste, Zergenyi does not immediately relate this information to the student, but instead only asks if his opinion would be of interest. The implication is, of course, that he is only conjecturing on the subject in his role as a greenhouse laborer and not, as we--his audience--know, in his role as a knowledgeable ornithologist. The student listens patiently, but apparently dismisses the information provided, conducts his experiments, and then "discovers" after a year's work what Zergenyi already told him was the case. Thus, not only is the student made out to be a dupe, but so is the educational system

which granted him a doctorate for researching questions long since resolved, questions Zergenyi could answer without elaborate and extended experimentation. As a result, it is his own acumen that is confirmed in the story, not only by the results of the experiment, but also by the fact that such a question would even form the basis for doctoral research. The telling of this story gives Zergenyi much pleasure because through it he achieves "personal vindication and the assertion of competence."[53] Rhetorically, the story is a successful strategy for in it he artfully and effectively asserts his position as one who is both knowledgeable and experienced on the rather esoteric subject of pheasant taste preferences.

Thus, through a variety of traditional mechanisms, Zergenyi captured an audience, albeit not the one he ostensibly sought, of family, friends, and patrons who identified with him and proved empathetic to his concerns. By responding positively to the carvings and to their maker, by appreciating his skills in transforming blocks of wood into artful carvings, and by valuing the knowledge which enabled him to infuse spirit into these inanimate forms by narrating their stories, his audience confirmed Zergenyi's authority and reaffirmed his status. As audience to himself, he gave power to his own voice and successfully resisted, at least temporally, those forces which had otherwise marginalized it.

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[53]Martin J. Lovelace, "'We had Words': Narratives of Verbal Conflicts," Lore and Language 3/1 (1979): 37.

In this chapter, I have described Zergenyi's relationship to his audiences, both real and imagined and have discussed how he intended the collection to be used pedagogically, and also how *he used* the collection strategically as commentary. I also examined the way in which the collection functioned reflexively (in itself a strategy) as a source of validation for Zergenyi himself. The final chapter takes up and elaborates on this final point by exploring the personal and psychological implications the act of creating holds for an artist, particularly in relation to experiences of disruption and upheaval. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, "Though in the history of folkloristics biography has served primarily to illuminate folklore, recent work has reversed the relationship to show the extent to which folklore can serve as a primary medium for recovering a life."[54]

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[54]Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Authoring Lives," Journal of Folklore Research 26 (1989): 140.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: CRISIS, CREATIVITY, AND THE INTEGRATION OF LIFE EXPERIENCE

One of the ways folklorists have come to understand the creative impulse in the artists they study is to see creativity as a strategy for managing or coping with significant changes in life pattern or the life cycle. In his account of songmaker Joe Scott, Edward Ives considers "the possible relationship between a period of particular sorrow, a specific loss, and a subsequent intense period of creativity."[1] Michael Owen Jones, reflecting on his work with Chester Cornett, the Appalachian chairmaker, observes:

> incapacitation, incarceration, or the loss of a friend or relative or of one's own health fosters introspection which in turn may promote the production of a song or a story or of another work expressing one's feelings. . . .[2]

These expressive behaviors embody or objectify the maker's attempt to impose order where there is chaos, to seek certainty where there is confusion, and, ultimately, to

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[1]Edward D. Ives, Joe Scott: The Woodsman-Songmaker (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978) 430.

[2]Michael Owen Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker (Berkeley: U of California P, 1975) 165. Jones expands on this point in Craftsman of the Cumberlands, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series, (Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 1989) 191-193.

regain some measure of control over his or her life.[3] Thus, they are not simply acts of compensation, the making up for that which was lost or taken away, they are acts of self re-creation, characterized by a restructuring which strives for a renewed sense of wholeness. As such, the expressive activities may be viewed as the performer's strategies for coping with, adjusting to, and overcoming life crises. The expressive behavior is not necessarily limited to the crisis period, but once initiated may continue throughout the life of the artist. Drawing on the notion of creativity as strategy, this concluding chapter examines the way in which Zergenyi used woodcarving initially to impose order and structure on a life disrupted by politics, and later as a vehicle for the integration of life experience.

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[3]Other works examining the relationship between crisis and creativity include Jane C. Beck, ed., Always in Season: Folk Art and Traditional Culture in Vermont (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Council on the Arts, 1982) 17-51; Simon J. Bronner, Chain Carvers: Old Men Crafting Meaning (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1985); Varick A. Chittenden, "'These Aren't Just My Scenes': Shared Memories in a Vietnam Veteran's Art," Journal of American Folklore 102 (1989): 412-423; C. M. Laurel Doucette, "The Emergence of New Expressive Skills in Retirement and Later Life in Contemporary Newfoundland," Ph.D. thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1986; Mary Hufford, Marjorie Hunt and Steven Zeitlin, The Grand Generation: Memory, Mastery, Legacy (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution; Seattle: U of Washington P, 1987); Stephen Inglis, Something Out of Nothing: The Work of George Cockayne, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies 46 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, 1983); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Culture Shock and Narrative Creativity," Folklore in the Modern World, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Hague: The Mouton, 1978) 109-122; Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978); Sally Peterson, "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth," Journal of American Folklore 101 (1988): 6-22; and Jude Wilson Powers, "Elder Artists: The Long Life of the Imagination," Gerontological Society of America and Canadian Association on Gerontology, Toronto, 12 November 1981.

Narratives of loss invariably punctuate our conversations about the carvings: the loss of prized possessions, the loss of a way of life, the loss of autonomy. But for Zergenyi the most grievous and irreconcilable loss was of his home. "I lost my homeland twice," he said. "Most people only lose it once." The loss of home can be especially traumatic because, as Edward Relph notes, home is the very "foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community . . . an irreplaceable centre of existence."[4] Relph describes a strong connection to a place as insideness and contends that being inside a place "is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place."[5] On a larger scale, Gerald Pocius argues that Newfoundland cultural identity is "inextricably linked to the experiences of place."[6] Here the emphasis is on the experiential nature of home and its construction based on "images that give mankind proofs or illusions of

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[4]Edward Relph, Place and Placelessness (London: Pion, 1976) 39. See also Kim Dovey, "Home and Homelessness," Home Environments, eds. Irwin Altman and Carol M. Werner (New York: Plenum P, 1985) 34.

[5]Relph 49. In A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland (Athens: U of Georgia P; Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 1991), Gerald L. Pocius discusses the concept and conditions of belonging to a place, 18-19. See as well Anthony P. Cohen, who defines belonging in terms of spatial and social relationships in "A Sense of Time, A Sense of Place: The Meaning of Close Social Association in Whalsay, Scotland," Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Culture, ed. Anthony P. Cohen, Social and Economic Papers no. 11 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1982) 20.

[6]Pocius 18.

stability."[7] Deep attachments to a home place develop over periods of time and are encouraged less by dramatic events than by "experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years."[8] The sense of rootedness that comes with belonging to a place provides the individual with

> a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to some where in particular.[9]

Place then is not simply a backdrop for the experiences that shape our identity, it is inextricably part of them and thus becomes a part of ourselves.[10] In the following passage, Schmuel Goldman, Barbara Myerhoff's friend and teacher, poignantly captures the connections between identity and home place and highlights the importance of keeping those places alive in memory long after they actually or effectively cease to exist. Goldman tells Myerhoff:

> I cannot say good-bye to all that. As long as my eyes are still open, I'll see those beloved people, the young, the old, the crazy ones, the fools, the wise,

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[7]Gaston Bachelard, "The Phenomenology of the Dwelling," Landscape 13 (1964): 32.

[8]Yi Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977) 183.

[9]Relph 38. See as well Kim Dovey, "Home: An Ordering Principle in Space," Landscape 22 (1978): 28.

[10]Keith Basso beautifully illustrates this point in "'Stalking with Stories': Names, Places, and Moral Narratives among the Western Apache," Text, Play and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society, ed. Stuart Plattner, 1983 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society (Washington, D.C.: American Ethnological Society, 1984) 19-55.

> and the good ones. I'll see the little crooked streets, the hills and animals, the Vistula like a silver snake winding in its beauty . . . For myself, growing old would be altogether a different thing if that little town was still there. All is ended. So in my life, I carry with me everything--all those people, all those places, I carry them around until my shoulders bend.[11]

Thus, ties to home, forged through the everyday experiences of living in and belonging to a place, can become especially emotionally charged when one is separated spatially and/or temporally from it. With prolonged separation, this remembered past becomes heightened in the imagination and "imbued with special qualities" when it is juxtaposed with a present that is unsatisfactory or found wanting in some way.[12]

For Zergenyi, leaving Hungary meant leaving a significant and compelling "world of meaning" which had been constituted both experientially and conceptually over the course of his lifetime and the lifetimes of his parents and grandparents and beyond.[13] He reacted to that loss with fear and anger, but moreover he responded with

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[11]Myerhoff 73-74.

[12]Fred Davis, "Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave," Journal of Popular Culture 11:2 (1977): 418. The relationship between nostalgia and the production of cultural forms concerned with recapturing lost or threatened identities is explored in Bronner, Chain Carvers; Maggie Holtzberg-Call, The Lost World of the Craft Printer (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992); Jones, Craftsman; Peter Narváez, "'The Newfie Bullet'--The Nostalgic Use of Folklore," in Narváez and Laba 65-76; James Overton, "Coming Home: Nostalgia and Tourism in Newfoundland," Acadiensis 14 (1984-85): 84-96.

[13]Tuan 179.

grief. In a study on people's emotional reactions to geographic dislocation, Marc Fried writes:

> it seems quite precise to speak of their reactions as expressions of *grief*. These are manifest in the feelings of painful loss, the continued longing . . . the sense of helplessness, the occasional expressions of both direct and displaced anger, and tendencies to idealize the lost place.[14]

Almost half a century has passed since Zergenyi was compelled to leave Hungary. He has been a refugee ever since, wearing the mantle of displaced person as a constant reminder of what was left and lost. Like Schmuel Goldman, he does not and cannot say goodbye. He too carries places from home around in his memory, in his heart, in his very being. What he was and has become has been shaped by his relationships to the places he has lived. As such, displacement has functioned for Zergenyi as a "touchstone for reality" which Maurice Friedman describes as:

> momentous events that imprint our attitudes and life stances in such a way that we bring them with us into all our future encounters. . . . Touchstones of reality are like insights, except that they are closer to events. To touch is to go through and beyond subjective experiencing. The very act of touching is already a transcending.[15]

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[14]Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home," The Urban Condition, Leonard J. Duhl, ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) 151. In "Images of Resettlement," Newfoundland Studies 6 (1990): 1-33, Bonaventure Fagan examines a variety of artistic responses to Resettlement, a government program which resulted in the relocation of inhabitants from many small communities in Newfoundland.

[15]Maurice Friedman, Abraham Joshua Heschel & Elie Wiesel, You Are My Witnesses (New York: Farrer, Straus, Giroux, 1987) 91.

Not all touchstones of reality are in and of themselves positive experiences and Friedman cites the Holocaust as the prime example.[16] Touchstone experiences, such as displacement has become for Zergenyi, transform people by destabilizing their worlds and fragmenting their identities. Later these same touchstones can become part of the force compelling them to reconstitute themselves and the worlds they inhabit both materially and symbolically. The means by which people refashion their identities and the materials they use to accomplish this task are of interest to folklorists investigating the relationship between creativity and life crisis, because, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett recently observed, "folklore can serve as a primary medium for recovering a life."[17]

Zergenyi does not dwell pathologically in the landscapes of his memories, but the carvings inevitably draw him back to Hungary and his experiences there. And some of them unavoidably take him back to the tragic situation which caused him to turn to carving in the first place. Displaced from his homeland, despairing of his future and the future of his family, Zergenyi turned to carving as an expressive outlet, as a means of coping with the crisis he was experiencing.

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[16]Cf. Myerhoff 22-25.

[17]Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Authoring Lives," Journal of Folklore Research 26 (1989): 140.

"You can't imagine what a turmoil was there. It was awful these days, these times, awful, awful," Zergenyi emphatically stated.[18] "These times" were the final months of World War II and the years of upheaval that followed. Displacement fragmented Zergenyi's world and caused disorder on social, cultural, and personal levels. Within the space of a few months, he went from being the manager of a large agricultural complex to being a "heater" stoking the stoves at a rest center for American soldiers; he went from having servants to being one, he left a spacious and well-appointed home for the cramped quarters of one and two room apartments, and he went from being a well-to-do citizen to a being a displaced person. In Hungary, his life, his work, even his hobbies, accorded him status and gained him respect. There his knowledge, skills, and accomplishments were recognized and lauded. Displacement robbed him of that status, that recognition, and, most significantly, it eroded his sense of control over his life and destiny. As a refugee, he could no longer take for granted the personal authority and autonomy he enjoyed in Hungary and he was painfully aware of the unpredictable future he and his family faced.

Recollections of those years just after emigration remain fraught with an anguish that time has done little to assuage. The memories of the deep depression Zergenyi experienced living as a refugee in Austria continue to engender strong emotional reactions. Carving helped to alleviate the despair and disillusionment he experienced by providing an expressive outlet, a therapeutic diversion. "This is very

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[18]Notes, 17 May 1990, 4.

good against depression to do something with the hands," he remarked many years later.[19] Focusing his energies on work that was both creative and productive fostered emotional resolution by redirecting his attention, at least temporarily, away from his personal tribulations.[20] Chip carving boxes in designs and patterns familiar to him from home and releasing birds contained within a broken tree branch perhaps offered him a symbolic, if not physical, release from the depression he admittedly found overwhelming. How serendipitous that one of the birds he saw in his vision and ultimately found in the branch broken off by the storm was a capercaillie, a bird with strong symbolic links to his native Hungary. By objectifying meaningful portions of past experience, the carvings had the power to create a semblance of continuity in the face of seemingly pervasive discontinuity. Doris Grumbach, a critic and novelist who experienced great despair upon turning seventy and simultaneously losing a young friend and colleague to AIDS, describes how the act of writing helps her make sense of otherwise inexplicable experiences:

> I think writing is an act of healing. It's an exorcism of sorts, to put into words and symbols this almost inexpressible anguish. That was why I started, to try and alleviate the despair. Writing shapes experience for me; it isn't ever the experience that gives shape to the prose. It's by looking for the words and formulating the sentences that you give some kind of order to it that the raw

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[19]Notes, 3 July 1989, 1.

[20]Jones, Handmade Object 39.

> experience never has--and in the process, I guess, reduce it to a manageable emotion.[21]

Although no other event would transform his life in the way that displacement did, Zergenyi continued to be faced with dislocations and crises that life inevitably brings: retirement, the death of his wife, declining health, and the incapacitation of aging. In 1967 at the age of sixty-eight, Zergenyi retired from his job as manager of the greenhouses at Cornell University. During his tenure there he had made a number of good friends and enjoyed the company of both the faculty and the students with whom he worked. "I was laughing a lot with these boys," he said.[22] He had found a place for himself at Cornell and the repercussions of retirement were not only the loss of significant social contacts, but also the loss of the identity and sense of purpose that comes with an occupation. He addressed this issue one day early in the research:

> Everyday I was working for years. What should I do? So, I have to do something because I was retired. . . . I'm a retired man. What should I do? I have to do something."[23]

The reiteration of the question of what he should do draws attention to a serious concern of Zergenyi's and of others who find themselves similarly displaced. He found the idea of doing nothing, of enforced idleness, inconceivable and he repeatedly commented on the importance of doing something, of being actively

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[21]In Wendy Smith, "A Profile of Doris Grumbach," The Key Reporter #57 (1991): 3.

[22]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

[23]Notes, 21 June 1989, 1.

engaged in some form of creative pursuit that occupied him both physically and mentally. Doing nothing was not only undesirable, it was also frightening and destabilizing. To do nothing was to consign himself to oblivion. To do something, however small, was an affirmation of existence. Jacob Koved, an elderly Jewish immigrant, recognized the importance of doing something in his own life. "I was very depressed in the hospital," he said. "Then I write a poem. Did you see it? A nice poem. So, I know I'm still living and I have something to do."[24] Similarly, Zergenyi commented that taking up carving had been a very "smart move" for him, one he would recommend to others in similar circumstances:

> I would recommend this for old people [who are] used to going to work eight o'clock to four o'clock everyday. From one day to the other you are doing nothing. You get crazy if you have nothing to do. It could be needlework or whatever. . . . [You] have to have something to do. I would be crazy without these carvings. I was sixty-eight as I retired and a lot of people are retiring as they are fifty-five and doing nothing. This is impossible![25]

After retirement, Zergenyi invested his energies full time in carving. Setting objectives for himself through the creation of a collection intended for pedagogical use

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[24]Qtd. in Myerhoff 200. For an expanded discussion of Jacob Koved's creative strategies, see Barbara G. Myerhoff, "A Symbol Perfected in Death: Continuity and Ritual in the Life and Death of an Elderly Jew," Life's Career--Aging: Cultural Variations on Growing Old, eds. Barbara G. Myerhoff and Andrei Simić (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978) 163-205.

[25]Notes, 27 July 1989, 1-2. Winifred Rhodes, an unemployed worker who whittled as a hobby recalled that after a week of "nothing to do" he told his wife, "I've got to have something to do or I'm going crazy." Rhodes turned to his wood working skills and began making chairs, ultimately creating for himself an alternative business. See Beck, "Always in Season" 47.

made the work purposeful and his efforts worthwhile. As such, carving was not simply a playful diversion to pass the time, but a meaningful, goal-oriented pursuit which engaged knowledge and skills accumulated over a life time.

His primary source of satisfaction was in the making of the carvings,[26] in shaping bits of wood into birds and then imbuing these forms with life through careful painting and artfully constructed natural habitats. Making the carvings, was, for Zergenyi, another way of engaging and experiencing the natural world. It became an especially important avenue for participation when cataract surgery made it impossible for him to hunt. Accompanied by his dog, and with a knapsack on his back he would set off into the woods around his upstate New York home on small excursions which brought him great pleasure. Instead of hunting, he focused his attention on collecting assorted materials for the carvings and their settings. On one such excursion he found a piece of wood lying on the ground and he said, "I know this piece of wood. I pick it up and I put an owl on it. It was a friendly owl."[27] Zergenyi was extremely fond of owls, so much so that he once remarked, "I love owls! We were hunting with owls."[28] He explained that hunters would attach owls to tree branches and then hide

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[26]Similarly, for wood carver George Blume "often what he made was less important to him than the making of it," in Bronner, Chain Carvers 139.

[27]Notes, 19 May 1990, 2.

[28]Notes, 18 May 1990, 7.

behind a cover. The owls decoyed potential quarries, because, he said, "every bird is angry for the owls."[29]

Making the carvings, telling their stories, and assembling the collection called on his extensive ornithological knowledge and drew together Zergenyi's many and varied experiences in the natural world. As such, carving could be interpreted as a means through which Zergenyi could fashion, if only on a symbolic level, the disparate pieces of his life into a kind of whole cloth. Personal integration, as Myerhoff notes,

> is not something automatically given by experience. It must be achieved. The sense of being the same person over time, despite great change and sharp disruption in social and cultural experience does not happen easily or inevitably. For this personal coherence, this sense of psychological integration to take place, the individual must be capable of finding and reliving familiar parts of his/her past history.[30]

Separated from familiar places, he invested his energy in creating familiar forms and perhaps through them found a means of establishing continuity and constructing a world he found explicable and, moreover, meaningful.[31] The reification of memory and experience becomes especially powerful when it can create a sense of wholeness in the life of the maker. It can do so, observes Hannah Arendt, because:

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[29]Notes, 18 May 1990, 7.

[30]Myerhoff, Number 108.

[31]Pocius 22-25.

> the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that . . . men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is their identity by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of man-made worlds.[32]

Confronting the past and seeking to retrieve a sense of wholeness from the fragments of life experience can be a difficult and painful process. Furthermore, achieving integration does not necessarily bring happiness. What it does bring, however, is a kind of resolution, a way of living with and even growing from the pain and paradoxes that life all too often foists upon us.

Zergenyi's love of nature and intense curiosity about the natural world are the "familiar parts" of his history and form the threads that connect hunting and ornithology to carving and the telling of every bird's story. All are creative acts thematically united. An analysis based on the construction of dichotomies as a way of illuminating culture might organize hunting and carving into antithetical categories, hunting being seen as destructive, carving as creative. If that distinction holds at all, it does so only superficially and it does so by dismissing the creative aspects of hunting by focusing attention on a single facet of the pursuit--the kill--and ignoring the complex processes and decisions that hunting entails. Zergenyi's passion for hunting resided not so much in the enjoyment of killing, or the acquisition of a trophy, as in the chase; in setting his instincts against those of the animal and relying on years of accumulated knowledge and experience to guide his actions. As such, hunting

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[32]Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958) 137.

becomes as creative an activity as carving is explicitly assumed to be. In the context of Zergenyi's life what becomes a far more interesting question is the way in which hunting and carving draw on the same wellspring of skill, knowledge, and experience. For Zergenyi, hunting, birding, carving, and storytelling are less distinct activities than "alternative ways of entering the same reality"[33]--that reality being the world of nature.

Carving began for Zergenyi as a form of distraction and compensation. I have argued that it later became a means for constructively integrating the past and the present. It succeeded in forging connections that fostered healing and renewal because it took meaningful images and experiences of the past and objectified them in the present.[34] Carving offered him the opportunity to display his skill and knowledge and as he worked he imagined an audience for the collection who would recognize and appreciate his ornithological expertise. While it is unlikely that he consciously considered the psychological implications of carving beyond alleviating depression by

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[33]Mary Hufford found foxhunters open and enter the Chaseworld both through hunting and through the stories of the hunt, leading her to conclude that both performances become "alternative ways of entering the same reality." In Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, Publications of the American Folklore Society New Series (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992) 8. Likewise, in Homeplace (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1991), Michael Ann Williams reported how people use narrative to "reinhabit" former houses, 14. Note also Zergenyi's own comments on p. 264, which acknowledge a parallel involvment in the processes of hunting and carving.

[34]I asked Maria to discuss this interpretation with her father and when we spoke a few days later she said, "The best that I can tell you is that he certainly was not opposed to this theory." She reported that Zergenyi had never really thought of the carvings in these terms, but he nodded his head as he pondered the interpretation and acknowledged it could be quite possible. Personal communication, 20 July 1993.

keeping busy, I nonetheless contend that his continued engagement in this activity was encouraged by more than mere diversion. I see the carving and the collection as a means of seeking acknowledgement, of reclaiming a former status as one knowledgeable about hunting and ornithology, and also as a means of gaining control over some portion of his life. I use the notion of control not in its repressive sense, but in the sense of authority and command--things he enjoyed, perhaps even took for granted in Hungary, but were not a regular feature of his life as a displaced person. And finally, I would argue that both carving and creating the collection provided him the opportunity to engage in purposeful and meaningful activity. For Zergenyi, then, carving became not only a means of ameliorating life circumstances, it also became a means of integrating life experience, of drawing together pieces of time and experience into a coherent and meaningful whole.

Trying to work within other people's realities is at the heart of the ethnographic enterprise. So is the management of interpersonal relationships. On the one hand, ethnographers seek intimacy with those they study in order to gather information that is telling, reliable, close to the truth. On the other hand, once this research is considered complete, we then seek a distance believed necessary to successfully analyze and interpret the material gathered. The voice of the informant, typically a lively presence in the descriptive portions of the ethnography, often fades to the background once interpretation begins. Here, the ethnographer's voice becomes dominant and all too often assumes an authoritative, assured tone that masks the

provisional nature of the interpretations offered. Too frequently we forget that our interpretations are precisely that--offerings. Both Zergenyi and I have been engaged in the inscription of meaning in his life and in his work; whether he would agree with the meanings I have construed is another matter altogether. What is offered here is my reading of this material, "the story that makes best sense"[35] to me as I take account of him and his life as refracted through the carvings, the collection, and our discussions about them. If we are realistic about our expectations as cultural ethnographers and the creators of ethnographic accounts, that is perhaps the best that we can hope to accomplish. In restating this position, I am not discounting the interpretations offered above. Instead, my intention is to remind readers that ethnographies are only ever partial truths, partial representations of what we study. While we may seek to learn everything there is to know, we will only ever discover and come to understand a part of what is there. Sometimes, we may even get it mostly right.

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[35]Angus Gillespie and Jay Mechling, eds., American Wildlife in Symbol and Story (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1987) 2.

EPILOGUE

Telling stories, whether they take the shape of ethnographies or novels, folktales or legends, involves a process of discovery, even when the story is one we have told before. Thinking about that led me to ponder my desire to tell this story of one man's life and work. When we come to consider and evaluate those things that attracted us it is typically at the end of the study when we have a different perspective on the material and on ourselves which is colored by the knowledge we have gained. Discovering those more or less elusive qualities that captured our interest is worthwhile because therein lies our personal stake in the endeavor. And in such intimate work as ethnography can be, especially when the research focuses on an individual, the personal element must be reckoned with. Ultimately, I have come to conclude that the things which draw us to our subjects of study are never fully explicable, but one thing they often do involve is a strong personal element that deepens our scholarly interest in the topic.

Part of what drew me to study the life and work of Andrew Zergenyi was a shared geographical connection. My father's parents were born in Austria-Hungary, Galicia specifically--a region in the northeastern section of the old Empire dissected by the Carpathian Mountains. I have never been to Galicia, nor has my father, or his parents since their departure in the early 1900s. But Zergenyi has and early in our

research he described the landscape to me, particularly recalling the mountain slopes lined with apple trees. My grandfather harvested the apples that grew on those trees, spending weeks each year travelling with his father from orchard to orchard picking the fruit of trees he owned on land he did not. Sadly, my grandparents died when I was a child much too young to be aware of a need, or perhaps more accurately *my* need, to be attentive to the past, both real and imagined. Talking to Zergenyi, listening to his descriptions of the regions where both he and my grandparents lived and worked, celebrated and suffered, and, ultimately, left for the promises of another land, helped me to order my past and integrate it with the present perhaps in the same way as I propose carving has done for him. Traversing those physical and cultural landscapes through his stories and reminiscences gave me the opportunity to visit places I come from, but have never been to. As such, Zergenyi's memories have become my touchstones to a past that is at once mine and not mine. I can only wonder if this story will serve the same purpose for his great-grandchildren.

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